

AN ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES LEADERSHIP'S
EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF KOREA ARMED FORCES,
JULY 1950-JUNE 1951

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fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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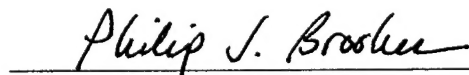


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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES LEADERSHIP'S EFFECTIVE
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This narrative recounts the historical leadup to the Korean War and an operational account of some of the battles and operations during the first twelve months of the war. Its primary focus is on US employment of Republic of Korea (ROK) Army units during named operations and the conditions which the US military leadership tried to set in order to assure the ROK Army would succeed in its assigned missions. Issues, such as type of mission, assigned strength, equipment availability and status, terrain, and US augmentation to ROK Army units, are addressed in the context of each operation to determine if the US military leadership effectively employed ROK Army units.

This thesis concludes that the many failures experienced by the ROK Army during the first year of the Korean War were due primarily to the lack of competent Korean military leadership and training and to the inexperience the average Korean foot soldier had as he went into combat, and were not a result of ineffective employment of ROK Army units on the part of the Eighth Army and the various corps and division commanders.

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ACRONYMS

AMIK	Army Mission in Korea
BG	Brigadier General
CofS	Chief of Staff
DIV	Division
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
FEAF	Far East Air Force
KDP	Korean Democratic Party
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group
KPR	Korean People's Republic
LTG	Lieutenant General
MG	Major General
NKPA	North Korean Peoples Army
PMAG	Provisional Military Advisory Group
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
RGT	Regiment
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKA	Republic of Korea Army
UNC	United Nations Command
UNTCOK	United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea
USAFIK	United States Army Forces in Korea
USAMGIK	United States Army Military Government in Korea

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Korean War provides the opportunity to study many aspects of coalition warfare. From the standpoint of currency, the Korean War is the first modern war conducted completely in the nuclear age. It was also a war in which nations fought under the flag of the fledgling United Nations (UN). Critical to any armed conflict is the manner in which a country or organization employs its armed forces. Failure to employ military units effectively has historically led to the loss of life and the inability of a unit to accomplish its objectives.

The key to the success of any operation is how effectively nations employ military forces to meet the objectives of the mission. Effectiveness for this thesis is viewed as how well the capabilities of a given unit are aligned with the requirements to ensure success of the mission. At the beginning of the Korean War, it is arguable that any of the Korean Army units were capable of mounting a determined effort aimed at the defeat of the North Korean forces. Because of this fact, South Korea was forced not only to fight for the survival of their country but to concurrently triple the size of their forces; to create the entire range of training, school, and logistical infrastructure; to improve its ability to command and control its own forces; and to develop a fighting spirit within its emerging army.¹

The Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) units fought valiantly alongside the United States (US) units numerous times throughout the war. Engagements from the squad all the way up to corps and army level happened on an almost daily basis during the first twelve months of the war. From confused delaying actions south to the Naktong River,² to the breakout of the Pusan Perimeter, to the capture of Pyongyang, and in furious battles as UN forces raced to the Yalu, the South Korean armed forces demonstrated an unfettered fierceness and determination of will.

Limitations

A constrained analysis of the US and Republic of Korea coalition operations, battles, and engagements during the Korean War will be necessary to keep the research within an acceptable framework from which conclusions can be drawn. The parameters within which the conduct of research will take place will consist of time, organizational structure, and command and control. By establishing specific parameters within which left and right limitations are established will allow for focused research supporting sound conclusions.

Time will be the first parameter within which the research will occur. All research and analysis will focus on the period that begins 25 June 1950 and ends on 30 June 1951. The purpose of this is to ensure the focus remains on the effective employment of ROKA units *for combat*. It will be necessary, from time to time, to reference actions outside of this time period (June 1950-June 1951). However, these references are specifically to provide background information, clarity of understanding, or for reference purposes. The

next limitation, with respect to time, will be the duration for which the analysis is conducted on a given operation or event. As a general rule, most of the battles lasted fewer than five days. Therefore, the analysis of operations will consist primarily during the times when actual combat took place. Specifically, emphasis and analysis will be placed on the initial employment and positioning of US and ROKA units, subsequent movements designed to influence the outcome of the battle, attached units to support the operation, and the outcome of the battle.

Organizational structure is the second parameter of the research framework selected to ensure focus of effort. US and ROKA units mutually supported each other throughout the entire duration of the conflict. As with time, established parameters of organizational structure ensure continuity of focus throughout the preparation of the thesis. Limitations on organizational structure for the conduct of research and analysis will focus on events that involved the US and ROKA Army units at or above the brigade level, with a particular focus on divisions and corps. It will be necessary, however, to conduct a limited evaluation of ROKA units at the brigade level, in addition to the division and corps level for two reasons. First, at the beginning of the Korean War, the Republic of Korea had only five organized divisions (1st, 3rd, 6th, 8th, and Capitol divisions) consisting of just over 37,000 men. Given the large number of battles and the relatively small number of ROKA divisions, it will be necessary to expand the sample of units included in the analysis, to ensure accuracy. Second, during some of the operations conducted by UN forces, participation in direct combat by ROKA forces was limited to

only brigade-sized units. Therefore, a limited analysis of brigade-sized units will take place during the first twelve months of the conflict.

The final limitation will center on command and control. Given the focus of the research is the effective employment of ROKA units by the United States, effectiveness of employment of US units by Republic of Korea Army commanders is outside the scope of this thesis. To ensure the focus of effort by the writer, command and control parameters are required. The analysis of command and control relations will focus on those operations in which a US unit was the higher headquarters of ROKA units. Command and control relationships existed from the very beginning of the war. Formal agreements, not just between US and ROKA forces but between all coalition forces, determined that all coalition forces would obey the orders of US commanders.³ As with time and organizational structure, command and control is multilimitational. In keeping with the organizational structure limitation, the command and control analysis will specifically focus on the division and corps level. The initial command and control analysis of ROKA brigades will be necessary as outlined in the organizational structure parameter section. The same criteria used in establishing parameters will be applied to organizational structure and command and control simultaneously to ensure standardization of the analysis.

Assumptions and Definitions

It is necessary to make a few underlying assumptions which are necessary to support the conduct of this research. First, it is necessary to assume, no matter what the

underlying reasons, that the US wanted a free and democratic Korea. Additionally, the US's efforts in establishing a constabulary force in the portion of Korea south of the 38th parallel was as much to ensure Korea remained free as it was to ensure local law enforcement. Second, the writer will make the assumption that beyond the reasons for the US's policy on supporting the constabulary force in Korea, the effort to establish the constabulary force was not a secondary effort as the US forces began to pull off the peninsula in 1949. The third assumption is that when analysis is conducted on the employment of brigade-sized ROKA units, then the same logic used by the commanders in the employment of these smaller-sized units was consistent with the logic used to employ the larger ones. The last assumption is that as commanders employed ROKA units into combat, it was not with any racial malice towards the Korean units. In other words, US commanders did not willfully employ Korean Army forces knowing that the unit had no chance of mission success.

It is also necessary to define and clarify some aspects of the thesis statement. First is the definition of the term "United States." For the purpose of this thesis, the United States is defined as individuals (political or military) who are American citizens and are in the position to directly control or influence the employment of ROKA units as it pertains to combat operations. The second term needing definition is effectiveness. Effectiveness is the capability of bringing about the desired effect through the successful use of factors contributory to the result.

Literature Review

There is a great volume of information dealing with the historical aspects of the Korean War, both from the American and Korean perspectives. There are, however, many limitations to the research on Republic of Korea Army force utilization during the Korean War. First, past research has focused mainly on the US Army units and not on the ROKA or other UN participatory forces. This lack of focused research on ROKA units will force the writer to draw inferences and conclusions from previously published and unpublished material which indirectly documents. While this will certainly pose some interesting challenges, they are challenges that the study and analysis of the numerous operations orders, reports, overlays, can overcome. Second, to be objective in regards to a thesis topic that can easily be subjective in nature, one must attempt to research the topic from various viewpoints and perspectives. Since, in general terms, the thesis topic deals with effective US employment of ROKA units, it follows that the research should include viewing this question from a ROKA perspective. Only recently has there been a serious effort to document events of the Korean War on the part of the Koreans and much of what does exist still requires translation from Hongul to English. Much of the insight gained into the Korean Army perspective comes from reports and published writings by US Army officers serving with the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG). Finally, the majority of the officers who were in a position to make a decision as to the employment of ROKA units are no longer alive to contribute to this research.

This research uses primary source documents such as operations orders, after action reports, memoirs, books, operations reports by the United Nations Command,

personal letters and publications of the Korean Institute for Military History. It should be noted that great effort was expended to ensure that the conduct of the research included a perspective from the Korean point of view. For this study, the writer consulted more than a dozen publications written by Koreans in an attempt to eliminate, or at least reduce, any institutional or cultural biases incorporated in the writings.

Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to determine what factors influenced the decisions of the United Nations Command to employ ROKA divisions and corps in the manner in which they did. The end of any conflict in which there is no clear victor always elicits numerous questions. Did the United States effectively employ ROKA forces during major operations of the Korean War? Subordinate questions incidental to this topic are: After World War II did the United States fail to prepare the Republic of Korea for the impending conflict? Subsequent to the outbreak of hostilities in June 1950, did the US fail to build up ROKA units to prosecute the war? Were ROKA units augmented with the support (artillery, armor, close air and logistics) necessary to successfully complete their mission? Were United States attitudes and beliefs towards ROKA readiness a factor in employment? What impact did local politics (United States and Republic of Korea) play on ROKA employment?

Determining why individuals, such as Generals Walker, Ridgway, and Van Fleet, employed ROKA units such as they did, will certainly give the reader a better perspective on the Korean War. There are undoubtedly many lessons that can be taken away from the

Korean War, and effective employment of coalition forces is certainly one of them. Additionally, in today's world where most military operations are joint or coalition operations, understanding the "whys" can start the US off on the path to success. Are coalition force capabilities sufficient to accomplish the mission and are there political considerations that impact which units should be chosen to execute a particular mission? This question is as valid today as it was fifty years ago.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis will consist of six parts that will be broken down by chapter. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter and will focus on raising the pertinent questions which support and lead to the logical question that is the basis of the thesis, setting forth the parameters, limitations and delimitations established to keep the framework of the thesis focused, to review existing literature, and to briefly outline the format of the thesis. Chapter 2 will focus on background information to assist in an understanding of the events leading up to the outbreak of hostilities. It will include a detailed account of the Japanese occupation of Korea until the end of World War II, reasons behind US and Soviet presence on the peninsula and establishment of the 38th parallel, establishment the new Korean governments (North and South), and US foreign policy towards these two governments. It will also include the genesis of the ROKA in November of 1945 and the supporting role the US played in its development.

Chapters 3 and 4 will discuss the employment of Korean Forces and will consist of the analysis of division and corps-level operations where ROKA forces were directly

involved in coalition operations with the US. Each chapter will cover a specific period of approximately six months starting from the initiation of hostilities in June of 1950 and terminating by the end of July 1951. The thesis will include manning and equipping levels, pressure from subordinate commanders who felt ROKA units were not pulling their fair share and were a danger to the unit,⁴ force ratios, terrain, and unit readiness. Additionally, the writer will conduct research on nonmilitary factors which might have influenced the employment of these units. These include but are not limited to political pressures from Washington or other nations who sent forces to Korea, and political pressures from the Korean government to have an increased or decreased role in the defense of their country. Within the realm of military leadership, this political pressure on the part of the Koreans proved to be a tremendous liability at the onset of hostilities. On numerous occasions, leaders whose positions were attained through political favors or cronyism were the first ones to break under the pressures of combat.⁵ All these factors will be included in the analysis and evaluated as to the degree of influence on the effectiveness of ROKA unit employment. Chapter 5 will conclude the thesis by synthesizing the analysis of the degree of effectiveness by the US and taking the conclusions and putting them in the context of lessons learned.

¹Sun Yup Paik, *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (Virginia: Brassey's, 1992; and Brassey's 1999), xi.

²Stanley Sadler, *The Korean War: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 294.

³Wayne Danzik, "Coalition Forces in the Korean War," *Naval War College Review* 47, no. 4 (1994): 33.

⁴James I. Matray, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 235.

⁵Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 194.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

At the end of World War II, a stalemate between communism and democracy that would eventually lead to more than 55,000 American dead in a little known corner of the Far East began to take shape. The cooperation between the Soviets and the US that helped defeat the German Army in Europe immediately began to unravel after the end of the war and by late 1946 a cold war which was to last for over fifty years began to solidify on the Korean peninsula. To further push this region of the Far East to the brink of war was the inability of the US and the Soviet Union to agree on the future of the Korean people. This end to US and Soviet cooperation and their inability agree on the establishment of an independent Korea laid the foundation for the first major military conflict between communism and the free world.

The Japanese Occupation of Korea

For more than ten years prior to Japan's occupation of Korea, Japan and Russia had struggled to gain control of the peninsula. The two countries continuously oscillated between hanging on the verge of outright conflict and negotiations, which included various settlements to include division of the country along the 38th parallel. By 1904, all efforts to reconcile their differences as to the status of Korea had failed and the resulting Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) gave Japan its first strong foothold in Korea. Through a series of agreements with the US, England, and Russia, Japan received the recognition it desired as having exclusive rights over all of Korea. The US interests in Korea at this time were not

very high and as such, at the beginning of the Japanese occupation, the US raised no objections. This was no accident. In 1903, the US was searching to open new economic markets in various countries around the world. One of the many areas the US had its eyes on was Chinese Manchuria. Russian troops were firmly entrenched in Manchuria to protect their railway interests from the Boxers, and Japan demanded (with American and British support) that Russia recognize Chinese sovereignty over the area and withdraw their troops. Thus, with this demand by the Japanese, the US hoped to embroil the Russians and the Japanese in a dispute which ultimately, the US hoped, would drive the Russians out of Manchuria and open the doors for American businesses.¹

At this time, America preferred Japanese occupation of Korea to that of a Russian occupation. By supporting the Japanese occupation of Korea, America hoped to achieve three objectives. First, the US had growing concerns about Russian aggression in the Far East. By allowing Japan to utilize Korea as a base of operations against Russia, it would facilitate Russian troop removal from Manchuria. Second, the ambassador to Korea felt that by supporting Japan's movement onto the peninsula, it would relieve the "friction of independence"² and finally US support of the Japanese occupation would actually give the Americans a position from which to bargain from in the future (this would later prove to be true in regards to the Philippines). The US also believed that Korea was still not yet capable of governing itself and that it would be "better for the Korean people and also for peace in the Far East"³ once Japan was in control of the peninsula. The US position was that the Koreans were incapable of providing any degree of self-defense and in fact the Treaty of Portsmouth⁴ (September 1905) solidified the US position when President Roosevelt commented that, "We cannot possibly interfere for the Koreans against Japan. . .

They could not strike one blow in their own defense.”⁵ Thus, at the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, Korea became a Japanese protectorate and would remain as such for the next forty years.

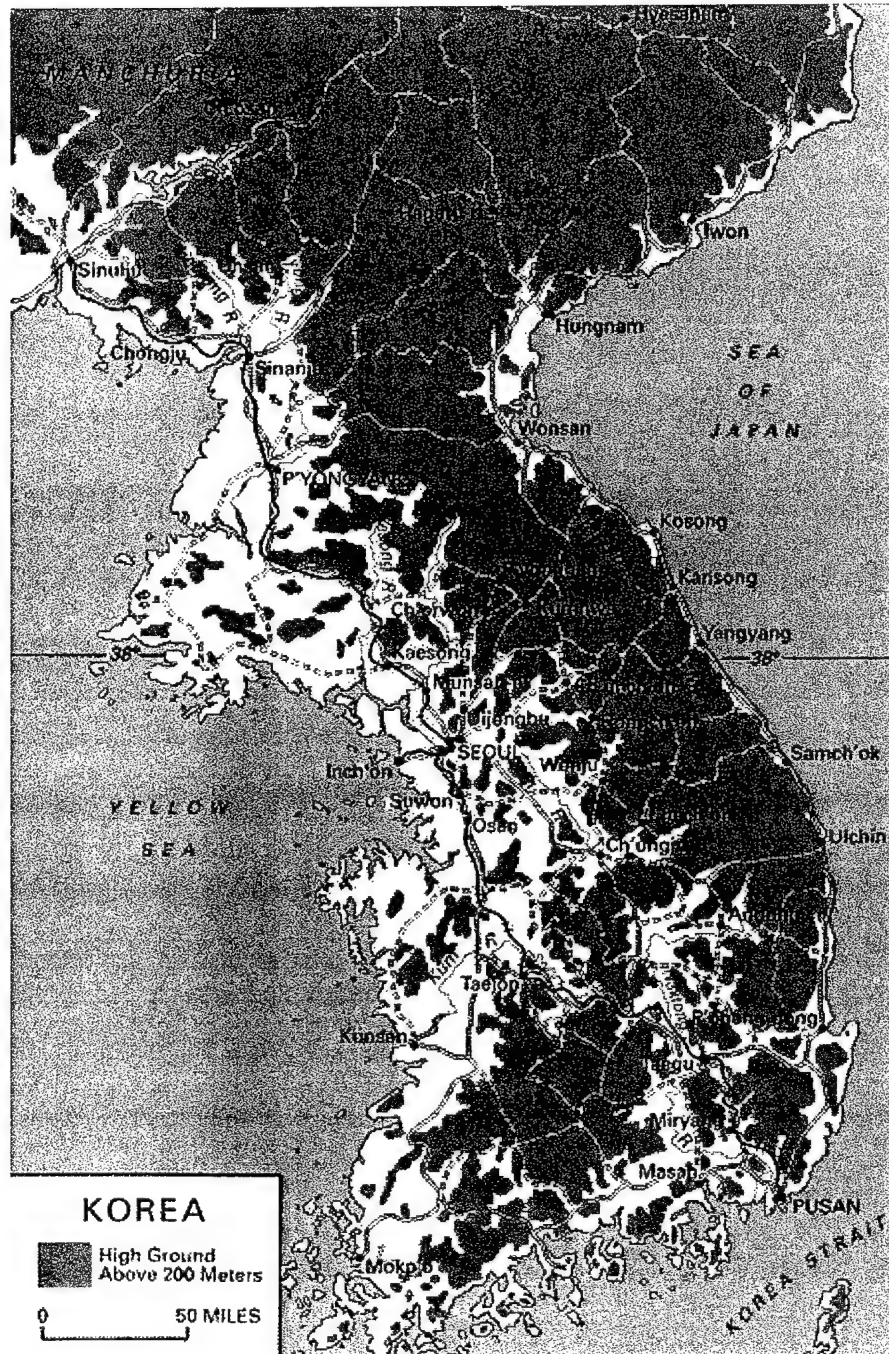


Figure 1

The Japanese undertook a systematic process of establishing firm control of all aspects of Korean life during the first five years of occupation. For more than five hundred years, Korea had followed a "Hermit Kingdom" policy, closing its doors to all outside influence. By the mid-nineteenth century, Korea realized it lacked the technological means to keep out any country with modern weapons who sought to extend their influence on the Korean peninsula. In 1876, Korea changed her policy starting with the Kanghwa-do Treaty with Japan. For the next twenty-nine years, Korea would actively pursue becoming a full-fledged member of the international community.⁶

Immediately after occupying Korea, the Japanese began to methodically break down Korea's sovereignty in violation of the Portsmouth Treaty. Within the period of five years after occupation, Japan removed Korea's authority to maintain diplomatic relations with other foreign nations, eliminated the Korean armed forces, and forced the abdication of the Korean king. In 1910, Japan completed its takeover of Korea through annexation of the peninsula.

The Korean people have historically been a fiercely independent people. From the very beginning of the Japanese occupation, resistance groups from within the country began to form. Resistance to the Japanese occupation was initially weak and resistance groups were easily (and sometimes brutally) put down by the superior Japanese military forces. It was not until 1919 that resistance to the Japanese occupation by groups within Korea increased in earnest.⁷ From 1920 to 1945, the increase in activity by the Koreans in attempts to reestablish their independence from Japan found a willing ally in the Soviet Union. Since 1905, when Russia was forced to give up its influence in Manchuria, they had sought a way to reestablish their dominance in the province. By providing assistance to

exiled Koreans in support of Korean nationalism, Russia hoped Japan's dominance in Manchuria would be seriously weakened to the point where Russian troops could move back in.

During these years, thousands of Koreans were active in anti-Japanese movements all over the peninsula and in southern Manchuria. Many of these movements (especially those based in southern Manchuria and the northern portion of the country) eagerly accepted the Soviet assistance. While both the Koreans and the Russians had different motives, they both had the same desire: weaken Japanese influence on the Asian mainland. For the Soviets to achieve their aim of a weakened Japan in Manchuria, the solution was to assist the exiled Koreans who organized themselves into guerilla groups fighting the Japanese from bases inside Manchuria and Russia. While the Russians were certainly willing to have the exiled Korean group conduct their dirty work for them, weakening Japan's influence in Manchuria was not their sole purpose for providing assistance. During this time, the Russians were undergoing their version of Manifest Destiny and were seeking to gain influence and export communism to neighboring countries. Gaining favor among Korea's future leaders and working towards establishing a communist foothold on the Korean peninsula would certainly be a step in the direction to supporting this end. The Russian government knew that by allowing the Korean dissidents to serve in the Russian Army during World War II and providing them with special training, such areas as guerilla tactics and political indoctrination at Russian universities, communism would develop a large cadre of procommunist Koreans that would be fully prepared and willing to establish a communist-based government at the first opportunity.⁸ Communism gained its first foothold on the peninsula during these times, and in the next two decades those groups

supported by the Russians would continue to grow in influence on the peninsula and after the removal of the Japanese in 1945, would be the genesis of what would become the government of the Peoples Republic of Korea.

One of the few lasting positive consequences of the Japanese occupation of Korea was that the Japanese sowed the seeds of an industrial revolution that continues even to today. Prior to Japanese occupation, Korea had no modernized infrastructure. It looked and functioned very much in the same way it had five hundred years prior. Japan quickly realized that to exploit the country's resources, as well as those of its Manchurian protectorate, it would have to develop the transportation infrastructure necessary to support modernization. At the beginning of the century, Korea was known as "one of the most roadless countries in the world."⁹ By 1945, Japan had eliminated this through the construction of more than 6,200 kilometers of railways and the construction and development of more than 53,000 kilometers of primary and secondary roads. This monstrous effort by the Japanese ensured the rail and road network reached every major city on the peninsula.

The most modernized and efficient means of transportation at this time was the rail system, and the Japanese took full advantage of this technology to open up the peninsula. The continuation of Japanese railways into Korea and Manchuria enhanced the Japanese development of these colonies due to the closeness of Japan to its new colonies. These new rail systems served to link Japan from its core to the remote regions of its new colonies thereby supporting and enhancing new markets, significantly cutting the time involved in the production, and consumption of goods. Most importantly, however, was Japan's ability to

move its troops from the port of Pusan (one hundred miles from the Japanese coast) to the outer most regions of Manchuria.

As a colony, Korea was destined to provide for the needs of Japan. As with the development of the railway and the road networks, the Japanese transformed what existed of the Korean economy into an extension of their own. Businessmen and entrepreneurs descended *en masse* and proceeded to take control of all sections of the economy. The agriculture component of the economy shifted from a multiproduce industry to one which produced mostly rice, much of which was shipped to Japan. Natural resources were exploited to their fullest to support sections of the Japanese economy and in general, all aspects of economic activity in Korea were controlled to complement industries in Japan and not to compete with them. This left the Korean economy completely dependent upon Japan, and in 1945, when Japan's ties with Korea were severed it left the Korean economy on the verge of collapse.

Japan not only exploited the natural resources of the country, but they exploited the people as well. By the mid-1930s, Japan initiated a process of assimilating the 23.5 million person population. The Korean people were forced to give up their religion in favor of the Japanese *shinto* religion, Japanese became the official language of all governmental activities and was taught in schools, and the Japanese even went as far as requiring newborn Koreans to take Japanese names. In 1938, a "volunteer" system began conscripting Korean youths to work in Japanese-owned industries. In 1939 Korean labor began being employed overseas, and in 1942 conscription for the Japanese Army was started. As the war progressed, Japanese exploitation of Korea increased. Japan stripped Korea of its rice production, confiscated cattle, and seized metal, both raw and processed, to support the

Japanese war effort. The exploitation of Korea forced the Japanese to increase their military presence to keep control of the country, from 46,000 troops in 1941 to more than 300,000 by 1945. By the end of the war 2.6 million Koreans engaged in forced labor and thousands of Koreans served in the ranks of the Japanese run police force.¹⁰ The Japanese sent 723,000 Koreans overseas to serve as laborers, and tens of thousands of women were forced to act as “comfort women” for Japanese troops. Japan sent many Koreans to work in Japan, and by January 1945, Koreans made up 32 percent of the labor force there.

The Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula ended in 1945 with the conclusion of World War II. The free and independent Korea longed for by Koreans did not come into being after forty years of Japanese colonial rule terminated. Despite the Cairo Declaration of 1943¹¹ that was reaffirmed at Potsdam¹² in July of 1945, the Korean people were still no closer to independence than they were under the Japanese occupation. The thirty-eighth parallel transformed from its initial purpose as a temporary military demarcation line into an immovable impediment dividing the Korean peninsula into essentially two separate countries. The northern region dominated by the Soviets and the southern region by United States.

United States Presence After World War II

Upon its release in early August 1945, the Japanese government refused to accept the ultimatum outlined in the Potsdam Conference. In an effort to facilitate the end of the war, the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945. On 8 August, the Russians declared war on Japan and began ever increasing amphibious and air operations in Korea north of the 38th parallel. No longer able to withstand the

combined efforts of the Allied offensive, on 10 August 1945 Japan offered a conditional surrender which the US refused. Five days later on 15 August, Japan finally accepted unconditional surrender.

When US troops first landed in Korea in September 1945, the perceived ability of the Koreans to govern themselves was hardly encouraging. Japan had secured all the positions of political, economic, and military importance on the peninsula since 1905, and very few Koreans had any experience in managing the functions associated with elements of power. The few Koreans who had managed to gain positions in these areas and had risen to positions of importance in industry, government, or the military were considered by the vast majority of the people as collaborators with the Japanese and were thus not trusted by them. This left the US with no pool of experience from which to draw the leaders of post World War II Korea. Furthermore, the Japanese had built and structure the Korean economy to serve as subordinate subeconomy to the Japanese. The vast majority of goods and services produced by the Korean economy was exported to Japan and served to complement sections of an already established Japanese economy. The dislocation of the Japanese markets from the Korean economy could not fail to have a tremendous negative effect on Korea. The loss of economic leadership and markets left the US with the problem of a deteriorating economy which required the establishment of new a market and an industry reoriented toward Korean rather than Japanese requirements.¹³

On 4 September 1945 an advanced party of the XXIV Corps entered Seoul to accept the surrender of Japanese forces in Korea. MacArthur selected Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, commander of the XXIV Corps, to carry out the terms of the surrender and to establish the United States Forces in Korea (USAFIK), the United States Military

Government in Korea (USAMGIK), a civilian government, and a constabulary force for internal security and along the 38th parallel. Receiving no guidance from Washington or his higher headquarters on the operation of USAMGIK, Hodge decided to temporarily keep the Japanese governmental system already in place as well as the Japanese officials serving in their positions. Hodge's intent was to keep these individuals in these positions and under American supervision until such time as trained Americans could assume governmental positions.¹⁴ This prolonging of Japanese rule infuriated the Koreans to such a degree that they violently protested the move by Hodge. Surprised by this, Hodge took immediate steps to remove all Japanese from official positions and replace them with Americans. He appointed Major General Archibald Arnold, commander 7th Infantry Division, as the military governor of Korea and subsequently requested civilian assistance from Washington to assist in setting up the new government. Fully understanding the military personnel serving as department heads lacked the depth and experience to properly administer these departments, Hodge kept select Japanese officials in advisory positions to complement the Americans.¹⁵

Initially the US continued to pile mistake upon mistake which continued to provoke the Korean people. The US concern with the expansion of communism around the world tended for the USAMGIK to select Koreans who were more politically conservative. This they did to the exclusion of all other political groups even if they were definitively noncommunist. Though many political organizations claiming to represent the will of the Korean people existed, political activity in the immediate postwar years centered around two major political parties, the Korean People's Republic (KPR) and the Korean Democratic Party (KDP).

It was widely believed by the US that the KPR was composed of predominantly leftist and procommunist supporters while the KDP was predominantly more conservative and anticommunist. Hodge was confident that by supporting and working with the KDP, he would ensure that the party most widely supported by the Korean people would come to power. In hopes of ensuring this, the US authorities in Korea supported efforts to eliminate the KPR and labor unions, which were widely believed to be communist controlled.

By the December of 1945, very little had been accomplished in establishing a stable civilian government, despite all the efforts of USAMGIK. Even though at this time there were over 75,000 Koreans working in USAMGIK, many Koreans still felt greater control and movement towards independence needed to take place. On 16 December, Hodge went so far as to advocate the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the peninsula.¹⁶ In the spring of 1946, very little had changed, and USAMGIK saw clear and unmistakable signs that the Korea population was very discontented and the country was on the verge of tumbling into disorder and chaos.

In order to establish a free and independent Korea, the US and the Soviet Union established in December 1945 a joint commission to discuss the creation of a provisional government in Korea after a five-year trusteeship period. The purpose of the commission was to work out the details in advancing the development of a democratic self-government capable of social, economic, and political progress for the benefit of the Korean people. The first round of talks began in March of 1946 and lasted less than fifty days before collapsing in May. It was not until May of 1947 that the joint commission met again to discuss the status of Korea. As it had done in the previous year, the joint commission failed to come to any determination as to the status of Korea. While there were various points of

disagreement on the part of the Soviets and Americans, the major obstacle was Moscow's position that only Korean political parties which did not oppose the provisions of trusteeship as outlined in the Cairo Declaration, should be eligible to participate in the formation of the new government. Since all political parties, with the exception of the communists, opposed any consideration of a trusteeship,¹⁷ that would have meant only communists would participate in the formation of a unified government.

Having failed to make the joint commission work, Washington decided to pass the issue of Korea off to the UN. In September of 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall went before the UN General Assembly and argued that attempts to resolve the Korean issue could not be accomplished bilaterally and that delaying the independence of the Korean people should not occur.¹⁸ Two months later in November, the UN accepted the US proposal of a UN commission to oversee the Korean issue.

Though slightly modified from the US proposal, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution which called for nationally conducted elections as opposed to each occupying power conducting elections in their respective zones. The Soviets denounced this resolution calling it illegal and submitted a counterproposal of withdrawing all US and Soviet forces from Korea by the end of 1947. Disregarding the Soviet proposal, the UN made provisions to send members of the UN commission of Korea to inspect conditions on the Korean peninsula in January of 1948. In response to the UN's disregard of the Soviet proposal, the North Korean guards at the 38th parallel refused to let the commission members pass. The UN sent letters to authorities in Pyongyang requesting clarification of the incident, but received no replies. In February, the UN authorized the UN commission in Korea to make preparation for elections in the southern half of Korea. Under the terms of

the 10 May Election Act enacted by the South Korean Interim Legislature, the elections would include positions for one hundred seats to the North based on the principle of proportional representation. On 10 May, Koreans participated in the first national election in a generation. Three weeks later the newly elected constitutional assembly convened and elected the KDP supported Syngman Rhee as its chairman.¹⁹ On 15 August 1948, the formal inaugural ceremonies of President Rhee took place in Seoul and in accordance with the constitution proclaimed Korea as a new republic.

The United States Army Military Government in Korea ended when the ROK government took control of the country on 15 August 1948. General Hodge immediately opened negotiations with President Rhee for a smooth and equitable transfer of authority from the US to the new Korean government. On 24 August, Hodge and Rhee signed a military agreement whereby the ROK government would gradually assume command of the nation's security forces. Until completion of this task and the withdrawal of American troops from Korea, the US would retain operational control of all Korean forces as per the agreement between President Rhee and General MacArthur. In the meantime, the US would continue to train and equip the Korean Constabulary and would continue to use the facilities and bases required for the maintenance of its forces. On 11 September 1948, the completion of the initial financial and property settlement that arranged for the surrender of Korean property and funds controlled by the US and for payment of Korean goods and services received during the period of occupation virtually ended the transfer of authority process.

The shift from military to civilian control led to a number of personnel changes and a realignment of authority within the US command structure in Korea. President Truman

appointed John J. Muccio as his special representative to Korea with the rank of ambassador and gave him authority to negotiate for the withdrawal of US forces. Muccio arrived shortly after the inauguration and established the US diplomatic mission in Korea on 26 August. On the following day General Hodge left the country and was succeeded by Major General John B. Coulter as Commanding General, USAFIK and XXIV Corps.

The position of the American military advisors with the Korean forces also underwent a change after 15 August. Official justification for their presence ended with the deactivation of the military government, but by the terms of the Hodge-Rhee military agreement, their training functions were to continue. To cope with the new situation, all advisory personnel were organized into the Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) under the command of Brigadier General William L. Roberts. During the remainder of 1948, PMAG more than doubled its size. The increase permitted slightly more than the former coverage of Korean units by the advisors, but the Korean forces were also expanding at this time and the demands for advisory personnel continued to mount. Since the organization was a makeshift group chiefly for administrative and training purposes, they occupied an unusual position and had little official status.

Before the South Korean elections, General Hodge received instructions to make plans and preparations for the gradual withdrawal of American forces from Korea by the end of 1948. On 15 September, the first phase of the approved plan went into effect, and USAFIK units began to leave the peninsula. The decision to withdraw and the desire to end the Korean commitment and its drain upon manpower and resources now came into conflict with the political realities of the situation.

In September 1948, the North Koreans formed a government that claimed jurisdiction over all of Korea. Taking the title of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), it became the direct rival of the UN sponsored ROK government. The Soviets and their satellites quickly recognized the DPRK, and the Soviet government announced on 19 September that it planned to withdraw all of its forces from Korea by the end of the year. Since the UN General Assembly was about to consider the Korean problem again, the US refused to commit itself to matching the Soviet withdrawal.

Thus, the rise of the North Korean communist state and the Russian eagerness to have all foreign troops leave the peninsula cast doubts upon the appropriateness of the US withdrawal program. The possibility of the North Koreans using force to unify the country while the ROK government was weak, and conditions were unsettled raised doubts in the minds of authorities in Washington about a quick evacuation of South Korea. In October, a rebellion within the Korean Constabulary sharply illustrated the domestic unrest and focused attention on the internal strife beneath the surface of Rhee's government.

Since the ROK defense forces were not properly prepared to resist invasion, the US State Department concluded in November that the continued presence of US forces would have a stabilizing effect upon the over-all situation. Syngman Rhee sent a plea to President Truman, urging the US to maintain an occupation force in Korea until the ROK forces were capable of dealing with any internal or external threat and that the US establish a military and naval mission to help deter aggression and civil war.

The events on the peninsula in the fall of 1948 together with the US desire to await the results of the UN General Assembly's talks produced a temporary slowdown in the removal of troops from Korea. When the General Assembly passed a resolution on 12

December calling for the complete withdrawal of American forces, more than 16,000 military personnel still remained in Korea. On 15 January 1949, the XXIV Corps left Korea for Japan. The remaining personnel formed the nucleus of the newly reactivated 5th Regimental Combat Team. General Coulter left the same day, and General Roberts assumed command of Headquarters, USAFIK, while retaining his position as Chief, Provisional Military Advisory Group.

The question of whether the regimental combat team should remain in Korea for an extended period led the Joint Chief of Staff to seek General MacArthur's comments in January. He told them that the US did not have the capability to train and equip Korean troops to the point where the Koreans would be able to cope with a full-scale invasion accompanied by internal disturbances facilitated by the Communists. If a serious threat developed, the US would have to give up active military support of the ROK forces. Under the circumstances, MacArthur recommended the remaining US units be withdrawn on 10 May 1949, the anniversary of the Korean elections.

On the day USAFIK received orders to prepare for the withdrawal of US forces from Korea, the Military Advisory Group received instructions to expand its organization. Previous experience had indicated that for the advisor effort to succeed, advisors in Korea would have to reach down to the battalion level, where the advisors could supervise training closely and correct faulty methods before the new recruits developed bad habits and practices. Thus, the Army decided to increase the size of the advisory group to enable it to participate in advisory activities down to the battalion headquarters level in the Republic of Korea Army and the district headquarters level in the national police force.

With the departure of the Headquarters, US Army Forces in Korea, the Provisional Military Advisory Group emerged on 1 July 1949 as an official entity called the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG).²⁰ The KMAG was designated to assist the ROK to develop internal security in organizing and training their army, coast guard, and national police to ensure that US military assistance was properly used.²¹ The KMAG advisors were dispersed amongst the ROKA divisions with the purpose of conducting military training, improving conditions for the general soldier and in general instilling the type of conduct and discipline common in US Army units. In theory, the KMAG was to provide an advisor to each commander from battalion to division level to assist the commanders in performing their duties. The KMAG advisors were also to be found at the sides of the Korean Minister of Defense, Korean Chief of Staff, in all general and special staff as well as assigned out as advisors to the various administrative and technical branches.²² In many instances, KMAG officers assigned as advisors to the Korean military were for all practical purposes in command of the units for which they were assigned to provide advisory services. The KMAG performed the lions share in establishing the professional military school system during the preconflict years of 1945 to 1950. Though designed to increase the warfighting capability of Korean forces, the schools focused on training Korean officers. The KMAG provided basic branch training to all Korean officers despite the need for officers in the field to fight the guerillas operating in the countryside.

Though KMAG had a fair degree of success in the training and equipping of the Korean armed forces, they did have their share of problems. The first and most obvious problems was the language and cultural barriers. An attempt to teach Americans how to

Speak Korean began shortly after US advisors arrived after the war. However, due to the poor instruction, interest in the project quickly dropped off and the school closed. While many of the obstacles of the language barrier could be overcome, the real difficulty lay in the fact that the Korean language just did not contain, in either written or spoken form, the necessary terminology for Korean understanding of modern military terms and equipment. Common military phraseology, such as *phase line*, *zones*, and *movement by bounds*, simply could not be translated into Korean. Even a simple term such as *squad* required a long and lengthy explanation before a Korean soldier could understand its meaning. This also held true for equipment. Definitions of terms, such as machine gun (*a gun that shoots very fast* or *gun of many loud noises*) and headlight (*candle in a shiny bowl*), were more descriptive than they were anything else.²³

Cultural differences constituted another problem the advisors were forced to deal with. In the majority of instances, the KMAC advisors were junior to the officers they were advising. How to deal with this fact caused as many problems as did the language barrier. The hierarchical culture of the Koreans dictated an immense deal of respect for elders and people in positions of authority. This same culture also allowed for people in these positions to demand that respect. This cultural fact caused a great deal of dysfunction when it came to the commander and his staff. Since ROK officers were very conscious about rank and the status accompanied by it, staff officers were frequently want to provide their commanders with anything but favorable information, and commanders were very reluctant about reversing any decision they made for fear they might lose "face" in front of their subordinates.

US military leaders would face many problems as they moved towards establishing a free and independent Korea. The lack of clear and concise guidance in establishing a governmental system, the failure of the joint commission, and the belief by many Koreans that the US should demonstrate a greater expediency if Korea was ever to achieve its independence were just a few of these problems. The most difficult problem USAFIK would face, however, would be the one that would ultimately contribute the greatest to the failure of the ROK Army on the first day of the war. That problem was the establishment of internal police force and its transformation into the ROK Army.

The Constabulary and the Birth of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces

From the very beginning of its occupation, the US saw the immediate need was the maintenance of law and order in Korea. At the time, however, the organization best structured for this role, the Japanese Army, was the same organization the US wanted to eliminate. A native police force existed in Korea, but the Japanese had utilized the native police as a means of suppressing the local populous and as an instrument of terror. Under the Japanese, this police force exercised its power over almost every aspect of Korean life. Politics, religion, economics, agriculture, and the general welfare of the population were all influenced on a daily basis by the police. The US implemented a program to replace the current police force with a newer one that would have less influence on what is considered beyond the normal responsibilities of a police force. From the very beginning, the implementation of the newer police force had its problems. As stated earlier, the police did not have the trust of the people, and the people did not have the experience to fill higher-

level positions of management. Therefore, after the US reorganized the police force, the Korean police frequently requested the help and support of the US Military Police.

At the same time, USAMGIK was faced with the resurgence of numerous private armies, all which claimed to be supported by the people. While many of these armies existed for years, this was the first time they could publicly announce their existence without the threat of oppression from the police or the Japanese army. These armies tended to be small groups of loosely organized people who tended to create these factions centered around individuals with political aspirations. Due to the armies centering around political aspirants, it was inevitable that clashes would occur between the various groups. In fact, this is exactly what happened when the mixture of high political ambitions and jealousy between the paramilitaries came into contact. It was not uncommon for bloody clashes to occur between private armies.

The reduction of US Forces in Korea, the weakness of the police, and the emergence of private armies all drove USAMGIK to come up with a program for creating the Korean Constabulary.²⁴ The US believed that by using Korean veterans who served in the Japanese Army from the various groups, it could solve numerous problems. By using these veterans as members of the Korean Constabulary, the US could potentially draw membership (and thus support) away from the illegal groups, strengthen law and order by assisting the regular police (and thus reduce the assistance given by the U.S. Military Police and the violent clashes between private armies), and ultimately provide the core organization that could form an independent government-controlled armed force.

November 1945 saw the creation of the Director of National Defense Office which had oversight of the Bureau of Police and the Bureau of Armed Forces. This office was

created to assist the police in the maintenance of law and order in the south and prepare the country for eventual independence. A study by General Hodge's staff concluded that a Corps of three infantry divisions and support units would be required. The organization of these forces would be based on US tables of organization and equipment and would be equipped from US surplus supplies and equipment with a three-year reserve.²⁵

The following month the US, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union met to discuss the four-power trusteeship of Korea reached during World War II. The meeting resulted in an agreement that the trusteeship would run Korea for a period of no more than five years.²⁶ The State Dept became concerned that the US involvement in building up the armed forces in Korea might create a misunderstanding by the Soviet Union and therefore, in late December, postponed making a decision on the recommendations made by Hodge's staff. Upon receiving notification that the plan had been postponed, Hodge directed USAMGIK to develop an alternate plan. This alternate plan became known as BAMBOO. The plan called for the production of a police reserve (Constabulary) of approximately 25,000 men which would be used only in the event of a national emergency. The force would be trained along infantry lines and would provide another means of establishing a force capable of internal defense.

Recruiting for this new force went well and at the end of the first month since Hodge approved the implementation of BAMBOO, three companies were created. By early February 1946, sufficient troops were on hand for the formation of the first battalion of the 1st Regiment. Equipment and facilities for training posed another problem for USAMGIK. Initially supplies were hard to come by, and facilities were rented or were factories or other buildings used by the Japanese during their occupation. To help eliminate some of the

weapons shortages, Hodge authorized the issuing of more than 60,000 rifles which had been scheduled for destruction. Each rifle had the equivalent of fifteen rounds of ammunition.²⁷

The Constabulary continued to grow and by the end of April, all eight of the original envisioned regiments were in place, though obvious deficiencies in training existed because of the rapid expansion.

During the first two years of the Constabulary's existence, it remained a reserve force for the police in the event of a national emergency. It had no legal authority to make arrests of any civilians and in fact spent most of its time training. There were, however, troubles between the police and the Constabulary. Because many of the men in the constabulary had come from varied backgrounds and had served in the Japanese army during the occupation, they were accustomed to the Japanese style of authoritarianism the police resented; the police on the other hand were resented mostly because of their title "Police" and the deep-rooted feelings Koreans had of the police during the Japanese occupation.

From the very beginning of the US occupation of Korea, General Hodge believed the establishment of a Korean Army was necessary. In a March 1952 letter to Major General Orlando Ward, Hodge wrote:

I was very interested in establishing a Korean Army from the beginning of the Occupation, not only to relieve American troops of many details in handling Korean security but, to get a start for the future when we accomplished our mission of setting up a Korean Government. I met with much opposition at higher levels apparently in the belief that at that stage of our relations such a move might be misunderstood by the Russians and be a source of difficulty when it came to the coordination of the American and Russian zones of Korea into a single nation.²⁸

As of September 1947, the establishment of two Koreas by all accounts was in the not to distant future and that same month the UN took responsibility for the establishment

of an independent unified Korea. The Soviets wanted an immediate withdrawal of all US and Soviet troops, so that the Koreans could establish a government for themselves. This was presumably because the Soviets knew the North was in a much better position militarily and could easily invade the south without too much difficulty assuming the Americans did not intervene. What the Americans wanted was to delay the withdrawal of US troops to give the Koreans time to establish sufficient defenses to repel a communist supported attack from the north.

The UN favored the US position and in November 1947, voted to establish the UN Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) which was to oversee the elections in Korea. The Soviets decried this act and working through the North Koreans, refused to let UNTCOK members north of the 38th parallel. In response to this the US pushed the UN to conduct elections in those areas which they had access.²⁹ In May 1948, UNTCOK called a general election, but these elections were only held in the south. Three months later on 15 August 1948 the Republic of Korea was officially established as a free and independent state.

The establishment of Korea as an independent state brought to light some issues which heretofore had not been dealt with to the satisfaction of USAMGIK. Now that Korea was an independent state and US forces would soon complete their withdrawal from the peninsula the question of Korea's ability for self-protection was asked once again. This time US military personnel in Korea and policy makers in Washington were both in agreement on the need to increase the capability of the constabulary. The question now was how much and with what equipment. Hodge proposed that an army of at least 100,000 men in six divisions with sufficient support units be put into place within one year.³⁰ The

equipment to support these troops would come from surplus supplies already in Korea, and as US forces withdrew from the peninsula, their equipment would be turned over to the Koreans, thus giving them the equipment immediately as well as alleviating the need to transport the equipment off the peninsula.³¹

While recruiting went smoothly, equipping of the infant army was another problem. Washington felt the army should be a defensive army only. This would preclude any chance of South Korea taking offensive operations against the North. As such, equipment included only small arms and support equipment. Therefore, heavier items, such as tanks, large artillery, and offensive type aircraft, were not considered as part of the program in the expansion of the ROK armed forces. Hodge disagreed with this on the grounds that North Korea had much newer and heavier equipment and that any attack by the north against the south would result in significant losses by the south due to this imbalance. Hodge's second request for additional equipment again received disapproval by the Army on the basis that it believed no matter what weapons were given to the south, they were incapable of stopping a large-scale invasion from the north and therefore the US did not want these weapons to come under NKPA control. As Hodge saw it, the US would not equip South Korea with heavy weapons because on the one hand the US felt the Koreans were incapable of stopping a North Korean attack, and on the other they were strong enough to go on the offensive to unite the peninsula. Interesting.

Hodge continued to press the need for equipping the ROK with heavy weapons and in August 1948, he partially succeeded with the approval providing the ROK with the M3 howitzer. Hodge succeeded by demonstrating the following factors supported this change in policy. First, he showed the M3 was necessary for internal defense. Additionally, the

Koreans were already trained on the M3, there was no demand in the US Army for the M3 since a newer model was already fielded, the logistics efforts would be minimal since the howitzers were already in Korea, and finally, it would help minimize the claims that the US was abandoning Korea with the withdrawal of its own troops.³²

Three months after the national elections in August, the Korean National Assembly passed the ROK Armed Forces Organization Act. This act redesignated the Department of Internal Security to the Department of National Defense and the Constabulary as the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA).³³ One month later, the US officially approved the designation of the ROKA (at a 65,000-man strength level) and immediately began to accelerate its augmentation and transference of equipment. By the end of February 1949, the US transferred enough vehicles, rifles, pistols, mortars, rocket launchers, and nontraining ammunition to outfit five light infantry brigades. Included with this equipment transfer were the M3 105 millimeter howitzers requested by Hodge as well as over one hundred 57 millimeter antitank guns. By April of the same year, President Rhee in a speech announced the ROK was capable of meeting and stopping any aggressive measures taken by North Korea.

By April 1949, US training of the ROK Army soldiers had reached 100 percent at the individual level, 90 percent at the squad level, and 30 percent at the platoon level. By the start of the war, these numbers would not change very much. Though by June 1949, most of the equipment authorized had been transferred to the ROKA, training deficiencies still existed due to the poor quality of equipment transferred and the lack of training ammunition. The training surveys of ROK soldiers showed a definitive lack in basic skills type training. To rectify this deficiency, the US implemented a rigorous six-month master

training program for all combat units from the individual to the regimental level.³⁴ Though the US had set equipment support for the ROK Army at 65,000, the Korean government had other plans. Upon reaching the 65,000 man strength level in April, the ROK government continued to rapidly recruit to its goal of 100,000 men. By the end of July, it had reached this level. This caused a significant problem for KMAG in that not only did they now have to train 35,000 more men than anticipated, but they now had fill additional advisory positions in two divisions.

Over the next year, KMAG would struggle with training and equipping the ROK Army. The ROK Army had expanded at a phenomenal rate in early 1949, and the US advisors were struggling to catch up. Across the 38th parallel, the North Koreans had implemented a program in which training kept pace with expansion. The contrast between these two armies would become immediately evident on 25 June 1950 when North Korea invaded the south and almost eliminated the ROK Army in the first week of the war.

¹Richard. Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 1950-1953* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1990), 15.

²*Ibid.*, 15.

³A. Whitney Griswold, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), 97; reprint, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.

⁴The terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the Russo-Japanese war, awarded Japan the right to establish a protectorate over Korea and transferred to Japan the Russian leases to the South Manchurian Railway and to Darien and Port Arthur. The settlement which had been reached with Roosevelt's intercession, made Japan the dominant power in Northeast Asia.

⁵Spencer C. Tucker, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Korean War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000), 345.

⁶*The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Korea: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 1.

⁷I. C. B. Dear, ed., *The Oxford Compilation to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 657.

⁸Whelan, 21.

⁹Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 16.

¹⁰Whelan, 22.

¹¹At the Cairo conference on 20 November 1943, China, the UK, and the US agreed that Korea should become independent "in due course." Stalin concurred with this and at the Yalta conference in February 1945 a form of trusteeship, first suggested by Roosevelt in early 1943, was discussed between the major powers, but was never implemented. After the USSR declared war on Japan in August 1945, Soviet forces mounted a number of small amphibious operations north of the 38th Parallel and the Soviet Twenty-Fifth Army advanced into Korea from China. As agreed with the USA (which had suggested the 38th parallel as a dividing line), the Soviets then occupied northern Korea while the 24th US Corps, which landed on 8 September from Okinawa, occupied southern Korea. Tucker, 1: 95.

¹²The last conference in which the principal leaders of the Grand Alliance came together from 17 July to 2 August 1945 to discuss the surrender terms of Japan (as well as other issues pertaining to the war in Europe). The conference reaffirmed the terms of the Cairo Declaration (to include the establishment of US and Soviet zones on either side of the 38th parallel) would be adhered to, Japan would unconditionally surrender, and that Japanese sovereignty would be confined to its four main islands. Though very little discussion on the status of Korea took place at Potsdam, it was, however a reaffirmation that at the conclusion of the war, Korea would be a free and independent nation "in due course". Tucker, 2: 525-526.

¹³Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), 6.

¹⁴*The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Korea: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 17.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶In mid-December 1945, Hodge submitted to MacArthur a less than positive outlook on the future of Korea saying that "Under present conditions with no corrective action forthcoming, I would go so far as to recommend we give serious consideration to an agreement with Russia that both the U.S. and Russia withdraw forces from Korea

simultaneously and leave Korea to its own devices and an internal upheaval for its self purification.”

¹⁷*The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Korea: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 25.

¹⁸On 17 September 1947 Secretary of State George C. Marshall addressed the United Nations General Assembly and made the following statement:

For about two years the United States Government has been trying to reach agreement with the Soviet Government....[But] the independence of Korea is no further advanced than it was two years ago....It appears evident that further attempts to solve the Korean problem by means of bilateral negotiations will only serve to delay the establishment of an independent, united Korea....We do not wish to have the inability of two powers to reach agreement delay any further the urgent and rightful claims of the Korean people to independence. *The Korean War*, 1: 27.

¹⁹*The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Korea: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 30.

²⁰Sawyer, 45.

²¹*Ibid.*, 42-45.

²²*Ibid.*, 58.

²³*Ibid.*, 63.

²⁴To-Woong Chung, “The Role of the U.S. Occupation in the Creation of South Korean Armed Forces, 1945-1950” (Ph.D. diss., Kansas State University, 1985), 79.

²⁵Sawyer, 10-11.

²⁶Chung, 84.

²⁷Sawyer, 16-17.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 28.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 28-29.

³¹Chung, 160.

³²*Ibid.*, 174.

³³Ibid., 182.

³⁴Sawyer, 67-73.

CHAPTER 3

ONE THOUSAND MILES OF WAR

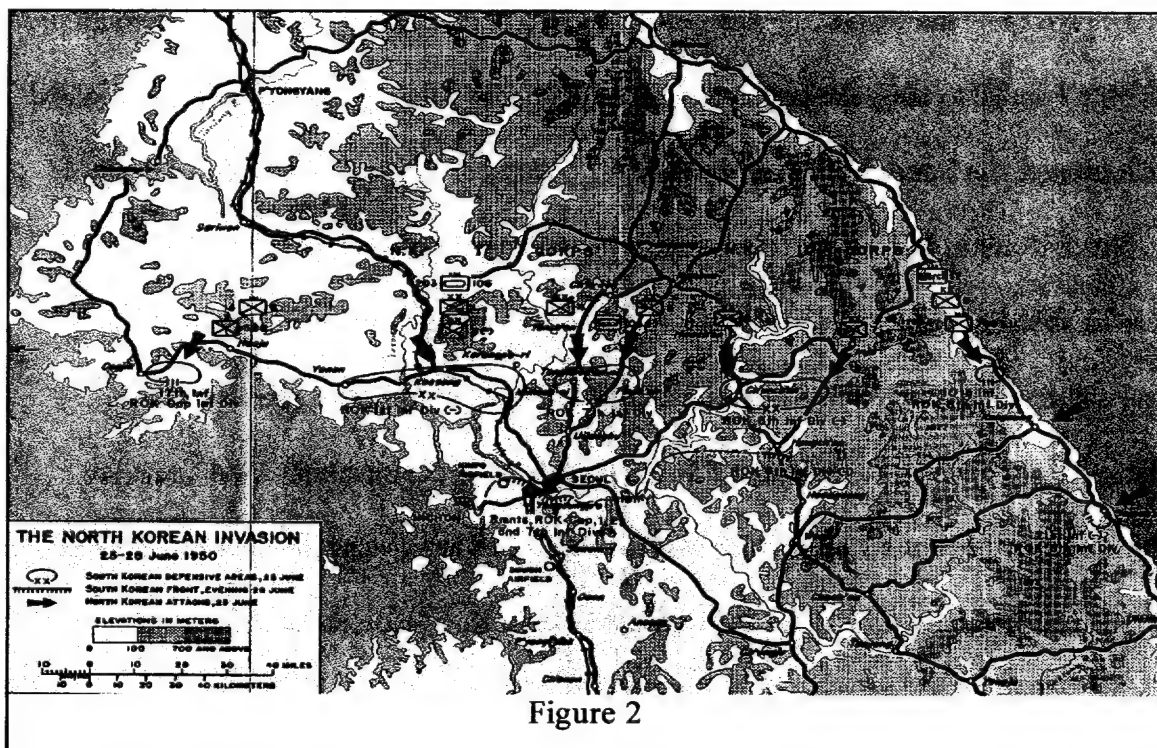
The Outbreak of War

After the USSR installed a Communist government in North Korea in September 1948, it promoted and supported an insurgency in South Korea in an attempt to bring down its government and gain jurisdiction over the entire Korean peninsula. Not quite two years later, after the insurgency showed signs of failing, the North Korean government undertook a direct attack, sending the North Korea People's Army south across the 38th Parallel before daylight on Sunday, 25 June 1950. The invasion, in a smaller perspective, marked the beginning of a civil war between peoples of a divided country. In a larger sense, it also marked the spreading of the cold war between the East and the West, which had erupted into open hostilities.

For a period of at least six months before the invasion, the South Koreans had warned of an impending attack by the North. Comprehensive intelligence reports prepared by Republic of Korea (ROK) Army Headquarters in December of 1949 estimated the enemy strength and equipment were such that it demonstrated that "the enemy would carry out a full-scale offensive campaign in the spring of 1950."¹ The United States, however, felt differently. The US argued the ROK Army was more than capable to defeat any threat posed by the North Koreans and were in fact concerned that the South would attempt to launch its own offensive against the North in an attempt to unify the peninsula.

The rainy morning of 25 June saw eight NKPA divisions begin their drive south of the 38th Parallel to unify the peninsula under communist rule. Significantly outgunned and undertrained, the South Korean Army virtually collapsed. Though almost equal in size, the North Koreans had a decided advantage in equipment and training. Armed with Russian vehicles, planes, and automatic weapons and having conducted significant higher-level unit training, the North Koreans had little difficulty in the initial phases of their attack. Key, however, to their attack was their use of the Russian built T-34 tanks for which neither the South Koreans nor the Americans had any means to effectively counter.

The North Koreans quickly crushed the South Korean defenses at the 38th parallel. The main North Korean attack force moved down the west side of the peninsula toward the South Korean capital of Seoul, thirty-five miles below the parallel, and entered the city on June 28 (figure 2). Secondary thrusts down the peninsula's center and east coast kept pace with the main drive. With the exception of the 6th ROK Division,² the South Korean Army withdrew in disorder and the troops driven out of Seoul were forced to abandon most of their equipment because the bridges over the Han River at the south edge of the city were prematurely demolished. The North Koreans halted after capturing Seoul on 28 June, but only briefly to regroup before crossing the Han.



The Road South

Quick to exploit the success of their initial attack, the North Korean Army continued its push southward against ROK Army units that had established a defensive perimeter along the southern banks of the Han River. To achieve its goal of dominance of the peninsula, the NKPA hammered ROK units with artillery and direct fire from T-34 tanks as their forces poured across the Han. Weakened by a loss of manpower and equipment, the ROK Army again reached the limits of its ability to fight the NKPA. The ROK Army continued to fight a series of delaying actions (figure 3) for the next six weeks until the UN forces finally established the Pusan perimeter. During this time, US forces began to flow onto the peninsula.³ The first contact of significant size between the US and NKPA forces took place in the Osan area between the NKPA and a battalion from the

24th Infantry Division. On 5 July, Task Force Smith, named for the battalion's commander Lieutenant Colonel Brad Smith, established a defensive position three miles north of Osan. Assisted by elements of the 52d Field Artillery Battalion, Task Force Smith took on two regiments of the North Korean 4th Division and thirty-three T-34 tanks. Badly outnumbered and without armor, effective antitank weapons, or air support, the US force was overrun. The next day, Lieutenant Colonel Smith could assemble only 250 men, one-half his original force. Task Force Smith suffered the same fate as the ROK units who had been fighting for the previous two weeks.

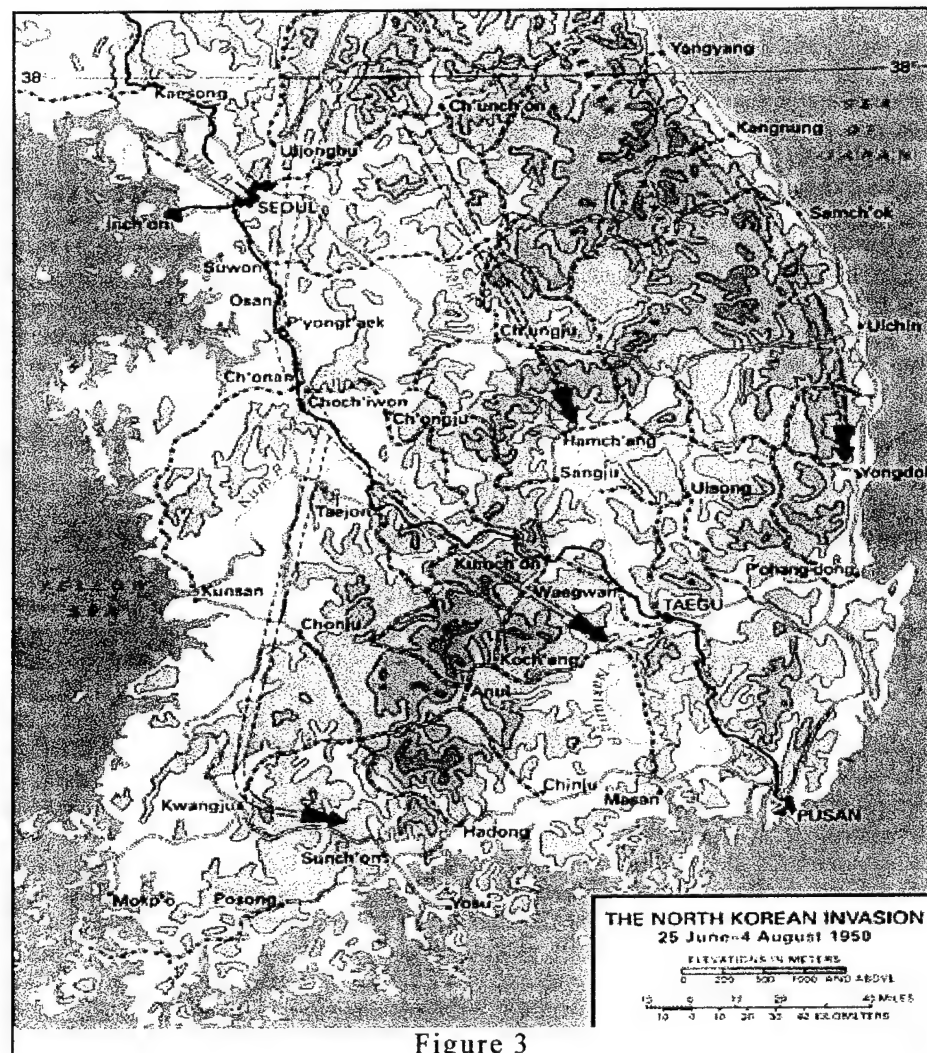


Figure 3

The month of July was a critical month for the ROK Army. As the ROK Army continued to fight delaying actions to the south, it feverishly attempted to reorganize its military forces into a coherent fighting organization. A thoroughly disorganized force, the ROK Army existed as a coherent fighting force on paper only. As the units reorganized, ROK Army commanders found themselves fighting with soldiers they had picked up along the way south. Without exception, the ROK Army became an army of "mixed divisions". Though small at first, these divisions quickly grew in strength as new recruits arrived and soldiers began to find their way back to their parent units. However they came across the new found soldiers in their divisions, commanders made the most efficient use of what they had. Division commanders would quickly organize their units with whatever forces they could muster and would put them back in the fight against the NKPA. In early July, the ROK Army strength was approximately 25 percent of the force it was when North Korea invaded.

Through the month of July, the ROK Army continued to fight, break contact, and then fight again. The fifth of July marked a significant day in the Korean War for the ROK Army. This was the day US and ROK forces formed the first combined front. US Forces, deployed along the P'yongtaek-Ansong line were assigned the western front centered around the Seoul-Pusan Highway, while the ROK forces became responsible for the central and eastern front. While historically the tactical significance of this line did little, if anything, to stem the southward flow of the North Korean Army, it did have a significant impact on the morale of the ROK Army. The line itself lasted little more than two days, but to the ROK Army who now had the assistance of US military personnel and equipment and were now fighting side by side for the defense of their country, this marked

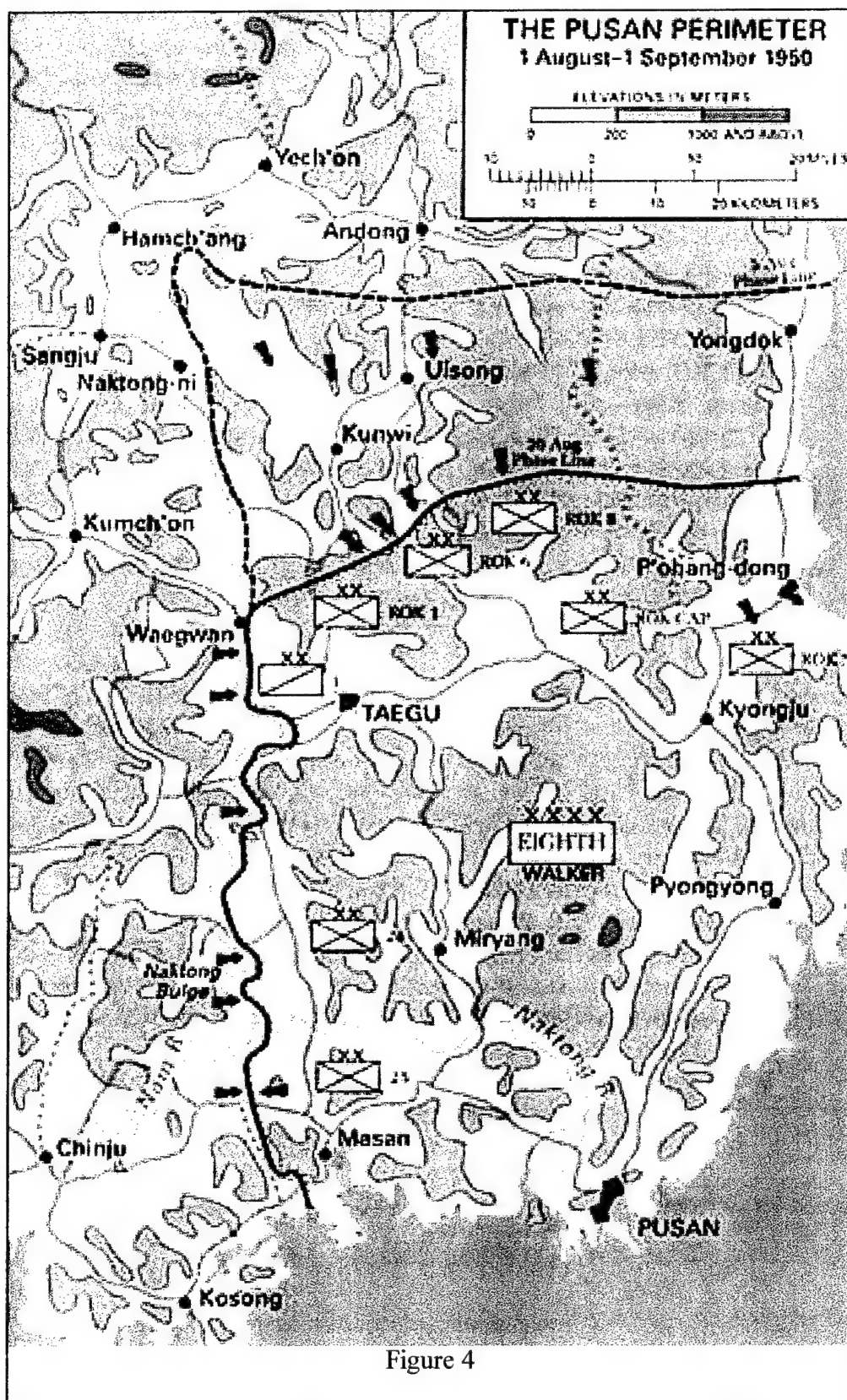
a turning point in the fighting spirit of the ROK soldier. July also saw the command of the ROK Army pass from Korean hands to US hands. On 14 July 1950 President Syngman Rhee turned over operational control of the ROK Army to the UN⁴ MacArthur turned control of all ROK ground forces to the Eighth Army commander three days later. It was at this point that the US took official control of ROK forces. Up until this point, the US had exercised indirect control over ROK troops through its KMAG advisors. President Rhee's decision to turn over operational control of ROK forces to the UN and subsequently to the US was necessary to facilitate the effectiveness of ROK Army employment by US forces to conduct combined operations.⁵

The battles continued for the remainder of the month of July with US and ROK forces establishing subsequent delaying positions southward. Having failed to stop the North Koreans at Osan, ROK and US forces were pulled back to establish defensive positions along the Kum River-Sobaek Mountain line. The 24th Division, under command of Brigadier General Dean, had the mission of defending along the Seoul-Taejon corridor. The ROK units to the east of the 24th were given the mission of defending the mountainous region all the way to the east coast and the Sea of Japan. Given the level of US forces and equipment in theater and the status of the ROK Army in mid-July 1950, this was the best utilization of the units available. The status of the ROK Army was still in poor shape, and they were still feverishly trying to reorganize themselves into a coherent fighting organization.

The end of July found UN forces fighting a series of battles in the southeastern portion of the peninsula which would settle into what was to become the Pusan Perimeter.⁶ By 4 August, US and ROK forces had taken up the positions which formed

the Pusan Perimeter. The perimeter was rectangular shaped and extended approximately 100 miles from north to south and 50 miles from west to east (figure 4). The Nakdong River formed the western boundary of the perimeter except for a short portion near the southwest corner where the Nakdong River merged with the Nam River. At the confluence of these two rivers, the perimeter continued south until it reached the sea. The northern boundary of the perimeter ran from Nakdong-ni to north of the town of Uisong and on to just south of Yongdok on the coast of the Sea of Japan. The ROK Army's portion of the perimeter ran from just north of Waegwan north to Nakdong-ni and east to the Sea of Japan. North of Waegwan, the ROK 1st and 6th Divisions of the ROK II Corps defended the line along the Nakdong River for approximately twenty miles to Nakdong-ni and eastward towards Uisong. From Uisong to the coast, the ROK I Corps, consisting of the ROK 8th and Capital Divisions, defended the eastern most portion of the Pusan Perimeter. The defensive line was anchored on the coast by the ROK 3rd Division.

Arrayed against ROK forces were six NKPA divisions and one independent infantry regiment. North of Waegwan, the North Korean 15th Division and part of the 13th Division would do battle with the ROK 1st Division. Further north and east, the remainder of the 13th Division and the 1st Division faced the ROK 6th Division. Moving eastward along the northern portion of the perimeter, the ROK 8th Division found itself preparing to fight the North Korean 8th Division, the ROK Capital Division prepared to fight the 12th Division, and finally, on the coast, the North Korean 5th Division and the 766th Independent Infantry Regiment faced the ROK 3rd Division.⁷



This northern boundary was best suited for the ROK Army as it was still in the throes of reorganization and did not have any armor or armor-destroying capability. The particularly rough and mountainous terrain which the ROK Army found itself defending, aided greatly in its ability to defend it. Ranging in elevation between 200 and 3,000 meters (650 to 9,800 feet), this terrain was well suited for dismounted infantry operations. While still at a disadvantage in both manning and equipment, assigning the ROK Army the mission of defending the terrain between Hamchang and the Sea of Japan was well within their capabilities. The terrain in the area being both mountainous and extremely predictive in the way that it would canalize the North Koreans worked in the favor of the ROK Army to offset some of the advantages held by the North Koreans in personnel and equipment. This terrain would not easily allow the introduction of significant armored forces into the area, thereby negating some of the disadvantage of the ROK Army's lack of antitank weapons. The steep terrain in the area also slowed the progress of the North Koreans as well making it more difficult for them to envelop ROK forces, their preferred method of overcoming an enemy. This ruggedness in the terrain and its predictive nature, gave the defending ROK units an advantage in that forcing ROK units out of their positions would be costly both in casualties and equipment to the North Koreans.

Readiness for War South of the 38th Parallel

Troop strength, equipment, and training status of the ROK Army were nowhere near the level of the North Korean's at the outbreak of the war. The lack of personnel, equipment, and training readiness on the part of the ROK Army and their American benefactors assured North Korean success across the entire 38th Parallel on 25 June. The

ROK Army had just 95,000 men and was far less fit than the US believed it to be. In contrary, the strength of the burgeoning North Korean Army continued to grow and by the dawn of 25 June, the NKPA had an overall 2:1 personnel advantage with an aggregate strength of over 198,000 men. The imbalance of personnel along the 38th Parallel between ROK and NKPA forces was the Achilles heel, which permitted the NKPA to have such stunning successes in the first month of the war. In the months prior to the outbreak of the war, ROK force levels along the 38th parallel remained relatively static while the NKPA continued to mass large numbers of trained combat troops in the hills north of the parallel. The ROK Army also unknowingly contributed to the disproportionate troop levels by rotating its frontline troops two weeks before the outbreak of hostilities. In one instance, the 7th Division, on the enemy's main avenue of approach into Seoul, was ordered by ROK Headquarters to rotate its reserve regiment to the rear. A regiment from the ROK 2nd Division was scheduled to assume the mission as the 7th Division reserve; however, this regiment did not move into the 7th Division's reserve position due to lack of barracks space. Why the ROK Army chose to rotate these two units when they did given its belief of an impending invasion by North Korea is a mystery. Yet, however one approaches this mystery, the failure by the ROK Army Headquarters to adhere to what should be considered common sense when rotating units in the face of an impending attack contributed to the overall numerical superiority held by the North Koreans on 25 June.

Simply by looking at the force ratios along the major avenues of approach used by the North Koreans, it is easy to see why the North Koreans were initially so successful (table 1)⁸. The force ratio between the NKPA and the ROK Army had an average of

almost 4.5:1 across the entire attack frontage. Along the Ch'orwon-Uijongbu-Seoul avenue of approach, the force ratio was as high as 7.1:1 against the weakened 7th Division. Without taking into account the marked advantage in equipment and training, if one merely applies the time tested force ratio standard of a 3:1 in the attack to determine the likelihood for success, it becomes evident that across the front, the NKPA set the conditions to achieve greater than 33 percent over the required 3:1 force ratio.

Table 1. Strength Comparison Along Avenues of Approach

Avenue of Approach	ROK Defensive Unit	NKPA Attacking Unit	ROKA: NKPA
Kaesong-Munsan-Seoul	1st Division 9,715 (5,000)*	1st Division 11,000 6th Division (-) 8,000 203rd Armor 2,000 Total 21,000	1 : 2.2 (1 : 4.2)
Ch'orwon-Uijongbu-Seoul	7th Division (-) 7,211 (4,500)	3rd Division 11,000 4th Division 11,000 13th Division 6,000 105th Armored (-) 4,000 Total 32,000	1 : 4.4 (1 : 7.1)
Hwach'on-Ch'unch'on-Inje-Honch'on	6th Division (-) 9,112 (unknown)	2nd Division 10,838 12th Division 12,000 15th Division 11,000 Independent Armored 1,100 12th MTSP 2,000 Total 36,938	1 : 4.1
Yangyang-Kangnung	8th Division 6,866 (unknown)	5th Division 11,000 766th Detachment 3,000 549th Detachment 3,000 Total 17,000	1 : 2.5

* Figures in parentheses represent real strength excluding personnel on leave

Upon settling in to the Pusan Perimeter, General Walker employed the Eighth Army and the ROK 1st and 2nd Corps as shown on figure 4. The ROK Army, having been reorganized into two corps, had the mission of defending the northwest and northern

portions of the perimeter. The approximate length of this line of defense was 85 of the 150 miles of frontage of the perimeter. Due to the distance needed to defend and the staggering losses of the ROK Army to date (estimates as high as 70,000 killed, wounded, and missing), the standard procedures of a defense in depth could not be attained by either the ROK Army or US forces. Current US doctrine of the time for a defense in depth called for "obtaining depth by the distribution of forces in several echelons and by holding out adequate reserves. Higher commanders will add to the depth of defense in a threatened sector by occupying prepared positions to the rear with either reserves or units taken from another part of the main battle position."⁹ The thinly held Pusan Perimeter was ripe for penetration in almost all areas. Walker, realizing he did not have the available forces to defend in depth, defaulted to doctrine prescribed in the defense along a wide front. This doctrine held that a commander may select to defend along a wide front if:

1. The defender has air superiority or adequate armor.
2. Reinforcements are available or expected.
3. The enemy is inferior in training and material, and lacks armor or mobility.
4. Frontage assigned is such that the local commander has no choice but to defend it thinly.
5. Strong natural obstacles, which aid the defense and restrict enemy movement, exist to the front.¹⁰

This is exactly what Walker had, and the defense along a wide front is exactly what Walker did.

Current operational doctrine as outlined in FM 100-5 prescribed that a defense along a wide front would require "emphasis to be placed on the organization and

occupation of critical terrain features throughout the width and depth of the battle position by strong, balanced, self-sustaining units. Each such feature is organized for all around defense, and the balance of the sector covered by patrols and detached posts.”¹¹ Walker made sure that key hills along the river which overlooked likely points of crossing were lightly held and that stronger local reserve forces were held back in order to counterattack. With the Pusan Perimeter established, the ROK Army was as ready as it could be for the coming battles.

While the disproportionate numbers in troop strength along the 38th Parallel was the primary factor in the failure of the ROK Army on the first day of the war, the disproportionate balance in equipment caused the quickness in which the collapse occurred. Whereas the NKPA had over 230 tanks and armored vehicles, the ROK Army had only 27 armored transports. The North Koreans had a decisive advantage in equipment at the beginning of the war (tables 2 and 3). Though in possession of over 2,000 antitank weapon systems, the 57-millimeter antitank gun, and the 2.36-inch “bazooka” rocket launcher were simply not capable of penetrating the armor of the T-34 tank. The NPKA also had numerical superiority in artillery systems. Of over 500 artillery pieces in the hands of the North Koreans, 120 of were of the 122-millimeter variety that could range over 11,000 meters. Comparatively, the ROK Army had 91 105-millimeter howitzers given to them by the US that had one-half the range of the NKPA 122 millimeter. The North Koreans had numerical superiority in virtually every weapon system available to each side at the start of the war. In addition to the simple numerical inferiority in the equipment, the ROK Army suffered decisive disadvantages in the quality and effectiveness of this equipment.

Table 2. ROK Armed Forces Personnel and Equipment Strength

Personnel			
8 ROKA Divisions	67,416	Support & Spec Branches	27,558
1 Air Force Wing	1,897	Marine Corps	1,166
3 Navy Flotillas	7,715	Total	105,752
Equipment			
Anti Aircraft	0	105-mm Howitzer	91
81mm Mortar	384	57mm Antitank Gun	140
60mm Mortar	576	2.36 inch Antitank Gun	1900
Tank	0	Armored Vehicles	27
Self propelled Gun	0	Airplanes	22
Patrol Boat	28		

Table 3. NKPA Personnel and Equipment Strength

Personnel			
6 NKPA Divisions	93,500	Constabulary Forces Bde	24,000
1 AF Division	1,800	1 Armored Division	10,000
2 Navy Divisions	15,000	Other	37,000
		Total	181,300
NKPA Equipment			
85mm Anti Aircraft	24	37mm Anti Aircraft	24
82mm Mortar	1,223	45mm Antitank Gun	586
76mm Howitzer	464	120mm Mortar	172
Tank	173	122mm Howitzer	120
Self propelled Gun	176	Armored Vehicles	60
Patrol Boat	30	Airplanes	190

The Soviets gave the North Korean government equipment to support the NKPA invasion south of the 38th Parallel. This equipment was of a newer variety and large quantities were on hand to include major stockpiles in Pyongyang to serve as reserves for the war. In contrast, the majority of the equipment supplied to the ROK Army by the US was of the World War II vintage. Due to this older vintage as well as US reluctance to meet the requests for newer equipment and spare parts, the ROK Army had to scrap as

much as 15 percent of the equipment supplied to them. Additionally, a large portion of the equipment was waiting for repair and maintenance. Some estimates have the unserviceable rate of the vehicles assigned to the divisions at approximately 35 percent. When combined with an overall shortage of vehicles, many divisions having an authorized Table of Organization and Equipment fill of between 50 and 65 percent vehicle strength, ROK Army mobility was as poor as it could get.

Despite shortcomings in training and equipment, the US was confident in the abilities of the ROK Army. Much of this confidence originated from the successes the ROK Army had in containing North Korean raids on the boarder and from the success the Army had in eliminating guerillas. During the weeks preceding the war, reports were frequent that the ROK Army, with the help of KMAC had "trained and equipped a first-rate ground army" which most observers rated "the best of its size in Asia."¹² Brigadier General Roberts of KMAC also echoed this sentiment just prior to his retirement in June 1950. As General Roberts gave a briefing to MacArthur and Bradley in Hawaii on 20 June, he explained that the South Korean Army could "meet any test the North Koreans imposed on it."¹³

The reality of the situation was much different than the US believed or at least wanted others to believe. Combat training under KMAC had not progressed much beyond company-level exercises. In mid-March 1950, the ROKA Headquarters issued Education Directive 2 which mandated the completion of battalion training by the first of June and the completion of regimental training by the end of September.¹⁴ Of its eight divisions, only four approached full strength. It had no tanks to train with and its artillery totaled a meager ninety-one 105-millimeter howitzers, most of which were in deployed

units and not available to train new recruits. The US equipment, war worn when furnished to South Korean forces, had deteriorated further, and supplies on hand could not sustain combat operations beyond an estimated fifteen days¹⁵ not to mention supporting the training of new recruits. In the six months prior to the invasion, the ROK Army had grown by 35,000 men and many of these men had not completed even a basic training course in infantry operations. Many of these men had been handed a weapon and sent directly to their unit where they were put onto the lines to engage in rooting out guerillas hiding in the mountains and caves of central South Korea.¹⁶

Following the outbreak of the war, established military schools almost ceased to exist. The problems mentioned earlier with personnel would be easy to overcome, as many young men were now eager to join the army to protect their country. However, the US recognized the problem of training them would prove to be more difficult. To solve this problem, KMAC established the first Replacement Training Center (RTC) at Taegu in mid-July. KMAC designed the school, under the supervision of three officers and five noncommissioned officers, to take recruits and provide them with ten days of training before sending them to their new units. In the early days of the war, it was usually necessary to send new recruits to their units with less than the desired amount of training due to the high level of attrition.¹⁷ As the following months progressed, four additional RTCs were opened at Kumhae, Kup'o-ri, Samnangjin (all near Pusan), and on the island of Cheju. At their peak, these five centers were providing fighting divisions a combined total of more than 2,900 recruits per day.¹⁸

Breaking the Cordon and Pursuit Operations to the 38th Parallel

After receiving approval from the Far East Command Headquarters for its plan to initiate offensive operations to break out from the Pusan perimeter, Eighth Army issued its operations order. The ROK Army, along with Eighth Army, was to attack from its present positions along the Taegu-Kumch'on-Taejon-Suwon axis to destroy enemy forces on a line of advance in order to link up with X Corps.¹⁹ The gist of the plan was as follows:

The Eighth Army would attack from its present line of contact, at 0900 on 16 September, with its main effort directed along the Taegu-Taejon-Suwon axis to destroy the enemy forces on line of advance and to establish contact with the US X Corps.

The US I Corps, the main attack unit, would make a frontal attack to seize the bridgehead over the Nakdong River nears Waegwan by using the US 5th Regimental Combat Team and the US 1st Cavalry Division. In order to facilitate the attack, the US 24th Division on the left flank and the ROK 1st Division on the right were to cross the river below Waegwan and above it, respectively.

Upon securing the bridgehead, the 24th Division would drive on Kimch'on and Taejon, followed by the 1st Cavalry division which would patrol its rear and lines of communication.

Each of the US 2nd and 25th Divisions, and the ROK I and II Corps would make a frontal attack and fix the enemy troops in their zones and exploit any local breakthrough to make the main effort easy. Especially, the US 2nd Division would strive to cross the river so that it could support the US I Corps troops' mission of establishing a bridgehead across the Nakdong. After the breakthrough is completed, Eighth Army would rapidly try to achieve a junction with the US X Corps and at the same time, together with the latter, drive on to the 38th Parallel pursuing the enemy troops until they could annihilate them all below the line. For this purpose, Eighth Army elaborated its directions and objectives of the pursuing operations as follows:

The US I Corps would make the pursuit in the axis of Waegwan-Kimch'on-Taejon to rapidly establish a contact with the X Corps and to interdict the retreat path of the enemy I Corps troops. If events warrant it, the American units could use the Taegu-Tabudong-Sanju axis. The latter corridor traverses the former axis near Sanju so that from Sanju, the

American troops could turn west toward the Kum River north of Taejon or bypass Taejon for a more direct route to the Suwon-Seoul area.

The ROK II Corps would pursue the enemy by way of Andong and Wonju toward Ch'unch'on, and the ROK I Corps would drive straight up the coastal road toward the 38th Parallel line.²⁰

Within the overall Eighth Army plan, the I Corps was the main effort of the perimeter breakout for the following reasons:

1. The distance to link up with X Corps was far shorter than from any other point along the perimeter.
2. The road network was better and of a lesser grade thereby making it more supportive of the advance.
3. The road network offered armored assets a better opportunity to exploit a breakthrough.
4. Resupplying advancing units would be simpler over the existing road and rail networks than by other means available.²¹

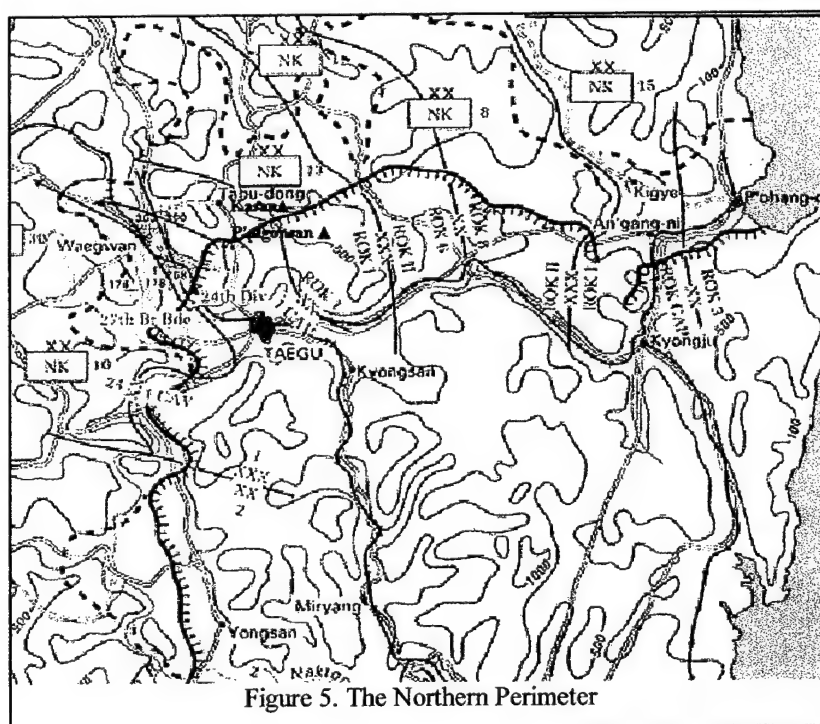
By this time the ROK Army's personnel strength levels had recovered. Even though the ROK Army had returned to its prewar strength through a combination of reorganization and recruiting, it still suffered from a low level of combat effectiveness because of the high level of casualties it suffered in the ranks of soldiers who had some degree of combat training. The effectiveness of the KMAC in producing partially trained replacements for the ROK Army played a great part in returning ROK units to almost full strength. By the time MacArthur launched Operation CHROMITE (Inchon Landing), ROK units held an almost 2:1 ratio over the NKPA units to their immediate front and UN forces held an almost 6:1 superiority in artillery, armor, heavy weapons, and ammunition to support them.²²

The ROK Army unit assigned as part of I Corps for the breakout was the ROK 1st Division. The new commander of the I Corps, Major General Milburn, realized the ROK 1st Division was significantly lacking in terms of allocated artillery in order to support this

operation. To compensate for this, he attached corps artillery assets to the 1st ROK Division to bolster the firepower necessary for it to complete its mission. Shortly before offensive operations began around the Pusan Perimeter, the 10th Antiaircraft Artillery Group was reassigned from the antiaircraft defense of Pusan and placed under the control of the ROK 1st Division commanded by Brigadier General Paik, Sun Yup. The 10th Antiaircraft Artillery Group, under the command of Colonel William Hennig, came to the 1st ROK with its 78th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion (eighteen 90-millimeter guns), 9th Field Artillery Battalion (eighteen 155-millimeter guns), and the 2nd Heavy Mortar Battalion (eighteen 4.2-inch mortars). This increase in artillery assets brought the firepower in the ROK 1st Division up to the equivalent of a US division.²³

Now on an equal footing with the divisions in the US I Corps, the ROK 1st Division was ready to go on the offensive. The mission of the ROK 1st Division was to “attack from Palgongsan to Kasan to destroy the NKPA 1st Division. You will prepare to cross the Naktong River and attack in concert with the US 1st Cavalry Division toward Sanju”²⁴ (figure 5). With the support of the 10th Antiaircraft Artillery Group and later, when the weather cleared from the Far East Air Force, the 1st ROK Division had a series of successes which surprised not only the division commander but the commander and staff of Eighth Army as well. The regimental commanders of the ROK division, took the commander’s intent and reached their assigned objective. Having done this, they continued on to seize key terrain in the vicinity of Tabudong and further punish elements of the NKPA’s 1st and 13th divisions. The success achieved by the ROK 1st Division relieved some of the pressure on the 1st Cavalry Division to its southwestern flank which allowed it to break through the NKPA lines after some bitter fighting in the Waegwan

area. The breakthrough in the ROK sector was a critical event in that it led to the destruction of the NKPA 1st Division and part of the NKPA 13th Division. While certainly the fighting spirit and the innovation of subordinate regimental commanders contributed significantly to their success, without Milburn's attachment of the 10th Antiaircraft Artillery Group and the allocation of air support to give the 1st ROK Division the fighting capability equal to that of a US division, the level of success would likely not have been as high.

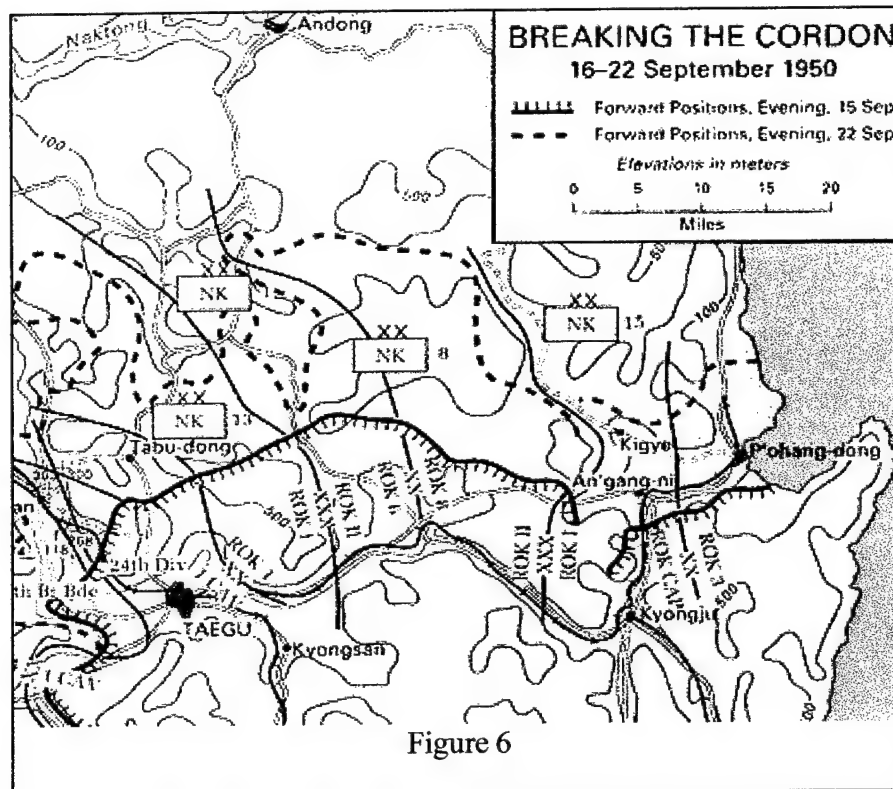


In the east, the ROK I and II Corps were to push forward on line to destroy the NKPA forces and continue northward with the objective of Ch'unch'on. The terrain in the ROK Army area of operations was especially treacherous and an attempted breakout would not be easy. Organic equipment to support artillery fires or mobility in ROK Army units at this time was still lacking, and no cure was in the immediate future. Compounding

this was the failure of US logistical personnel in Japan to fully understand the needs of the ROK Army. After the huge loss of ROK Army equipment in the first two weeks of the war, the ROK Army placed an emergency requisition for more than 8,000 vehicles to replace those they had lost or abandoned. Logistical personnel in Japan made a study of the vehicle requisition and found that "the requisition for these vehicles had made it clear that they were emergency requirements needed in July. The fact that the ROK Army had been operating without the vehicles from July to October indicated they were in excess of current requirements."²⁵

The ROK I and II Corps were not augmented to the same degree as the ROK 1st Division due to the ROK 1st being a part of the main effort and the ROK I and II Corps serving as a secondary effort (figure 6). The US did not see the need to augment these two corps based on estimated strengths of the NKPA forces the ROK Army would encounter. By mid-September, Eighth Army intelligence estimated the NKPA strength along the perimeter at approximately 70,000 men and equipment readiness at less than 50 percent. Later it would be learned that along the front, NKPA troops were below 30 percent of their original strength and that replacements came from South Korean personnel who had been forcibly conscripted.²⁶ Though not augmented to the same degree as the ROK 1st Division, the ROK Army did receive support from General Headquarters. Along the coast, the ROK I Corps received support from the US Navy and the Far East Air Force for their portion of the attack to break out of the UN line around Pusan. Although not initially successful, ROK forces were able to break through NKPA forces utilizing the support they received. Though the terrain was such that it favored the

NKPA, ROK forces overcame this challenge and pushed north along side the US I Corps to link up with forces landed at Inchon.



Crossing the 38th Parallel and the Race to the Yalu

The incredible turnaround in the UN's situation since the establishment of the Pusan perimeter gave US and ROK forces the drive and determination to eliminate the NKPA and continue to push north to unify the peninsula. The decision by the UN to cross the 38th parallel and move to unify the peninsula would change the face of the war. The guidance MacArthur received from the JCS to govern his future actions in respect to crossing the 38th parallel was that UN Forces could conduct military operation north of

the 38th parallel, with the intent of destroying North Korean Armed Forces but that he should under all circumstances avoid involvement with the Soviet or Chinese forces.²⁷ Thus this directive received from the JCS later became known as the "September 27 Directives."²⁸

Based on the 27 September Directives, MacArthur and his staff put into action his plan for the invasion of North Korea. Five days later on 2 October 1950, he issued Operations Order 2 to all UN forces.²⁹ This order outlined the plan he had been contemplating for the previous two weeks and the general version of the plan is as follows:

1. As the main attack effort, the Eighth Army will cross the 38th parallel and attack northward along the axis of Kasan-Sariwon-P'yongyang.
2. The US X Corps will land at Wonsan, port city on the east coast, within a week after the main attack troops launch their attack. The X Corps will secure a beachhead there and proceed northwest along the axis of Wonsan-P'yongyang to link up with Eighth Army, and thus to interdict and encircle enemy troops.
3. The UN Forces will halt at a line along Chonju-Kunuri-Yongwon-Hamhung-Hungnam, and the ROK troops will assume full responsibility of military operations north of that line.³⁰

In accordance with a proclamation made by President Rhee in Pusan on 19 September, the ROK Army crossed the 38th parallel independently of any orders received by the UN. Thus, on 1 October 1950, elements of the ROK I Corps continued to pursue fleeing NKPA units across the parallel. The ROK 3rd and Capital Divisions, along the east coast, were in the best position to continue the pursuit forward into North Korea.³¹ The ROK I Corps received allocated naval gunfire support from the US Navy as well as air support from the Marines. The success of the ROK I Corps was such that by 10

October it had captured the port of Wonsan and was prepared to continue north. This rapid advancement caused MacArthur to consider canceling the US X Corps landing at Wonsan and move them in by land. After considering the logistics implications of an overland movement of both Eighth Army and X Corps, MacArthur dropped his thoughts of canceling the landing.³²

Immediately after securing the city of Wonsan and its harbor, the ROK I Corps (now attached to the US X Corps) received the order to continue its march northwards with the objective of securing the North Korean border. The ROK Capital Division would lead the Corps northward and the ROK 3rd Division was to protect the port and to "mop up" the remaining enemy resistance in the area until relieved by the US 1st Marine Division, whereupon it would follow on behind the Capital Division. Again, success was in the immediate future of the ROK I Corps. In the week following the landing of X Corps at Wonsan, the ROK I Corps advanced to points along the Tumen River where for the first time in the war, ROK Forces looked into China.

In the Eighth Army sector, the ROK 1st Division was moving forward to assume its position along the western flank of the Eighth Army. General Paik, the commander, requested to see General Milburn to discuss the mission of the 1st Division. At that time, the mission of the ROK 1st Division was to advance along the western coast near the Yellow Sea. Paik understood that the mission would not take his unit to P'yongyang as Eighth Army advanced north. Convinced it was important to the Korean nation to have a Korean unit enter P'yongyang, he confronted Milburn with this fact and asked him to reconsider assigning the 1st Division to a mission which would allow it to participate in the operations against the North Korean capital. After some considerable discussion,

Milburn agreed and the 1st ROK and US 24th Divisions switched missions in the advance into North Korea.³³

During Paik's discussions with General Milburn, a key concern of the Eighth Army's commander was the lack of transportation organic to the 1st ROK Division. As part of the division's troops, the 1st ROK still had the 10th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment attached. In working with Colonel Hennig, the two men developed a plan that would significantly increase the mobility of the division. In simple terms, during times when the enemy situation would permit, the 10th AAA would shuttle the division forward with its 100-plus vehicles and then move the 10th's ammunition forward to the division. In a series of these moves, Colonel Hennig believed he could provide a level of mobility to the ROKs which would come close to other US divisions.³⁴ The plan was successful and the 1st Division maintained a combat tempo that placed them in a position to be not only the first UN troops into P'yongyang, but the first ROK Army unit as well.

The ROK 1st Division kicked off its advance northward on 11 October. The division failed to progress more than three miles that day, and its commander recognized something needed to be done. Again, General Milburn came to the assistance of the ROK 1st. This time it would be in the form of a company of M-46 tanks, a corps engineer company, and a forward air control team. The new attachments gave the division the few key assets it needed to vigorously attack the NKPA units in sector. With these new assets, the enemy units which the ROK 1st had been fighting gave way and the 1st ROK Division progressed northward at an extraordinary rate. Through Sibyon-ri, Singye, Sangwon, and Samdun to the outskirts of P'yongyang the division continued to eliminate

the NKPA units in its path. On 19 October, the 1st ROK Division became the first UN unit to enter the North Korean capital.

On 24 October, MacArthur issued the order for all UN forces to push north to the Korean border as quickly as possible and by utilizing all available forces. The ROK forces had been pushing since the morning of the twentieth and were meeting light resistance.

There was, however, a noticeable change across the front. During the last two weeks of October and into November, and increasing number of Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) soldiers were starting to appear. Initially these forces were believed to be a small number of volunteers who had come across the border to assist the communist allies against the west. Still, UN forces continued to push northward. By early November, US and ROK forces pushed to within eyesight of the Yalu River with many of the ROK forces actually securing the south side of the river. During the next two weeks, actions along the front were relatively calm as UN forces planned for the final offensive and units continued a slow movement north while concentrating on eliminating bypassed pockets of enemy resistance. As UN Forces moved into position for the 24 November attack, which called for advancement to successive phase lines to the Yalu River, it seemed to the military leadership that the enemy had broken contact. This concerned General Headquarters, but not much was done based on the estimate that enemy strength now only consisted of about 83,00 North Koreans and between 40 and 80 thousand Chinese forces.³⁵

By late the afternoon on the 25th of November, the last UN offensive operation of 1950, which many called the "Christmas Offensive," failed to produce significant results and along the majority of the Eighth Army and ROK II Corps front a weakness began to appear. In the west and center, the Eighth Army and the ROK II Corps sustained

significant losses due to the large-scale offensive operation of two CCF Armies. As a result, MacArthur made the decision along with Generals Walker and Almond to withdraw all UN forces along a more defensible line. Therefore, the successes achieved along the east coast by the ROK I Corps were sacrificed.

Over the next three weeks, UN forces under continuous pressure from the CCF retreated south. From positions along the Ch'ongch'on River in the west, to Hungnam harbor in the east, UN forces fought a series of delaying actions southward until finally established along a line of defense approximately along the 38th parallel (figure 7). After six months of continuous fighting and heavy losses on both sides, the alignment of the belligerents was approximately the same as it had been on 25 June.

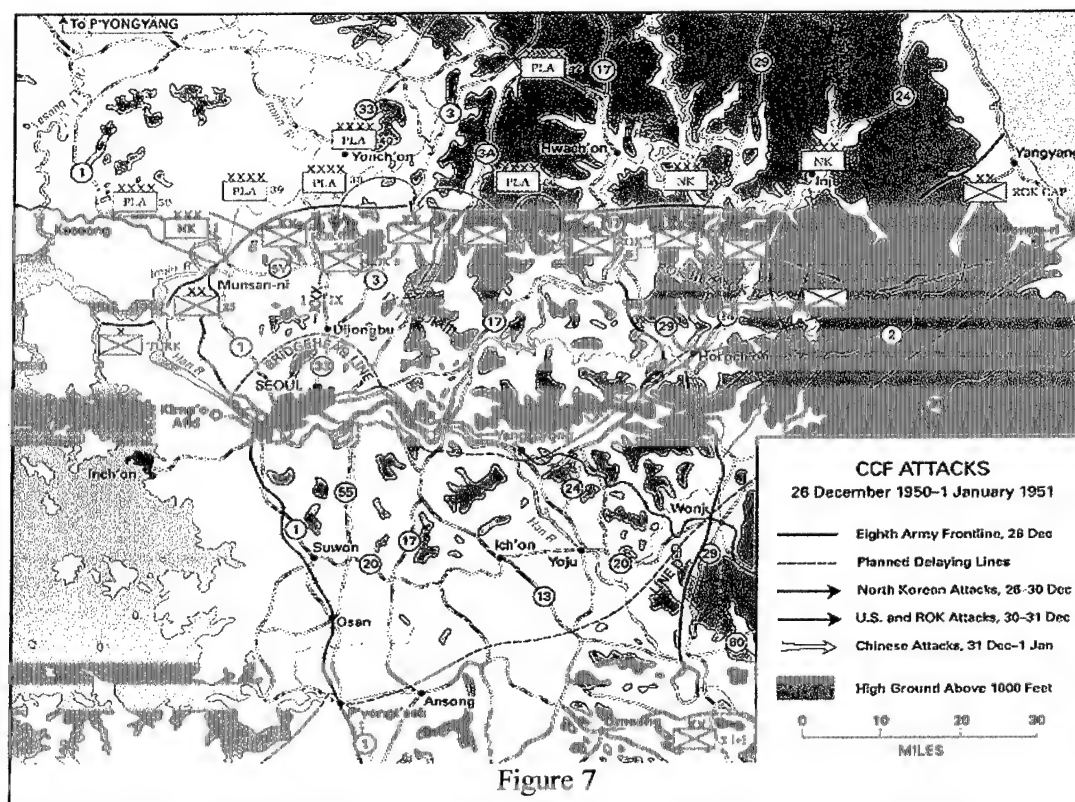


Figure 7

Though a slight lull in the fighting would occur in the days immediately following Christmas of 1950, it would not be long before Chinese Communist Forces would launch a renewed attack on UN Forces on the eve of the new year. The new round of attacks would see Seoul change hands for the third time since the invasion, but the battle hardened UN Forces who were now out-numbered by 2 to 1 were prepared to engage in some of the fiercest battles of the war and under some of the harshest conditions.

¹*The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Korea: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 134.

²Based on intelligence information from captured NKPA soldiers and after observing NKPA's actions over the previous weeks, the division commander, COL Kim Chong O, took additional security measures and put his division on a higher state of readiness after consulting with his staff and KMAG advisor, LTC Thomas McPhail. The 6th Division, based in Ch'unch'on, was the only division along the frontlines who cancelled all leaves and passes the weekend of the invasion. Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 1950-1953* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 110.

³On 29 June, MacArthur flew to Korea where he received a briefing on the current situation of the war. After listening to the briefing MacArthur drove north to the Han River defense line to get a first-hand view of the current status of the fighting. There he could see Seoul and after seeing sporadic enemy artillery firing from the city and witnessing the withdrawal of large numbers of the Korean Army he returned to Tokyo. Two days later he sent a report to the Joints Chiefs of Staff stating:

The ROK Army is completely incapable of counter-actions and there is a danger of a further breakthrough...The only assurance for the holding of the present line, and the ability to gain later the lost ground, is through the introduction of US ground combat forces into the Korean battle area. If authorized, it is my intention to immediately move a United States regimental combat team to the reinforcement of the vital areas discussed (the Han River defense line) and to provide for a possible build up to a two division strength from the troops in Japan for an early counter offensive. Roy E. Appleman, *US Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June-November 1950)* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1961), 47.

⁴The following is the letter as written by President Syngman Rhee as he relinquished operational command over all Republic of Korean Armed Forces to General MacArthur for the duration of the war. *President Rhee's Letter to General MacArthur*

[database on-line]; available from <http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/1953/rhee.htm>; Internet; accessed 5 February 2001.

July 14, 1950

Pusan, Korea

Dear General MacArthur:

In view of the common military effort of the United Nations, on behalf of the Republic of Korea, in which all military forces, land, sea, and air, of all the United Nations fighting in or near Korea have been placed under your operational command, and in which you have been designated Supreme Commander United Nations Forces, I am happy to assign to you command authority over all land, sea, and air forces of the Republic of Korea during the period of the continuation of the present state of hostilities. Such command to be exercised either by you personally or by such military commander or commanders to whom you may delegate the exercise of this authority within Korea or in adjacent seas.

The Korean Army will be proud to serve under your command, and the Korean people and Government will be equally proud and encouraged to have the overall direction of our combined combat effort in the hands of so famous and distinguished a soldier who also in his person possesses the delegated military authority of all the United Nations who have jointed together to resist this infamous communist assault on the independence and integrity of our beloved land.

With continued highest and warmest feelings of personal regard.

Sincerely yours,

Syngman Rhee

⁵*The Korean War*, vol. 1, 348.

⁶United States Army, *Korea-1950* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, Center of Military History, 1989), 19.

⁷Appleman, 254.

⁸*The Korean War*, vol., 147.

⁹United States Army, FM 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, August 1949), 141.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 140.

¹¹Ibid., 141.

¹²Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 1950-1953* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 108.

¹³Richard H. Rovere and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The MacArthur Controversy and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), 113.

¹⁴In his book, Sawyer discusses the failure of Education Directive #1, issued in January 1950 by ROKA Headquarters. This directive established a timeline for all units to complete squad through battalion level tactical training by the end of March. By mid-March it was obvious that the ROK Army would fall far short of this objective and therefore ROKA HQ issued Education Directive #2. Education Directive #2, however, did not fare much better and at the outbreak of the war, only 16 of the ROK Army's 65 battalions had completed the training. Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), 77.

¹⁵One month before his retirement in June 1950, MG Roberts of KMAG informed his advisors that 10-15 percent of all weapons and 30-35 percent of all vehicles were not operational and that they would need significant maintenance before they could be returned to an operational status. Whelan, 109.

¹⁶Whelan, 109.

¹⁷Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), 148.

¹⁸Ibid., 149.

¹⁹Appleman, 543.

²⁰*The Korean War*, vol. 1, 661.

²¹Ibid., 543.

²²Ibid., 659.

²³Sun Yup Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom* (Virginia: Brassey's, 1992; Brassey's, 1999), 50.

²⁴Paik, 51.

²⁵James A. Huston, *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice: US Army Logistics in the Korean War* (London: Associated University Press, 1989), 332.

²⁶Appleman, 546.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 607.

²⁸J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1969), 147.

²⁹On 19 September in Pusan, President Syngman Rhee announced at a mass meeting in the city, "We have to advance as far as the Manchurian border until not a single enemy soldier is left in our country." This decree was significant in that it notified the UN that regardless of what UN Forces would do upon reaching the 38th Parallel, ROK Forces would continue north in its bid to reunify the country. Collins, 163.

³⁰*The Korean War*, vol. 1, 757.

³¹In reality, of all the UN Forces, the US X Corps was in the best position to continue the fight northward. However, MacArthur's plan mysteriously called for the X Corps to redeploy from the Seoul area to Inch'on in order to prepare for a second amphibious on the port city of Wonsan and for Eighth Army to prepare to continue the fight northward. At the time the UN Operation Order 2 order was issued, X Corps was well supplied, equipped, and in a position to jump out of Seoul and attack north. In contrast, the Eighth Army was spread out between Suwon and Pusan and was short of supplies as well as exhausted from the past two months of combat. This switching of positions caused a significant delay in UN forces in the western sector being able to continue pursuit operations against the NKPA. Additionally, X Corps tied up the port of Inchon in preparing to load out for the assault on Wonsan thereby significantly limiting the amount of supplies and equipment which could be brought in to support Eighth Army. United States Military Academy, *Confrontation in Asia: The Korean War* (West Point: Department of History, 1981), 27.

³²Collins, 159.

³³Paik, 60.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 64.

³⁵Collins, 219.

CHAPTER 4

SETTLING IN ON THE 38TH PARALLEL

A New Commander and a New War

The beginning of 1951 would bring significant changes for UN forces in Korea.

The most significant changes were the establishment of a unified command under the Eighth Army and the installation of Lieutenant General Matthew Ridgway as its new commander. Ridgway had replaced Lieutenant General Walker as the Eighth Army Commander after the latter died in a vehicle accident north of Seoul. Ridgway brought with him a renewed sense of purpose and offensive spirit to UN forces and shortly after arriving in Korea, he knew there were several important matters he needed to tend to immediately. At the time of Ridgway's arrival there was a concern amongst members of the ROK government and the ROKA that the US may abandon Korea and leave it to its own means to defeat the NKPA. To impress upon them that this was not the case, he immediately met with President Rhee to let him know that he had not come to Korea to lead the Eighth Army back to Japan.¹ For Ridgway, there would be no Korean Dunkirk.

Ridgway intended to return the Eighth Army to an offensive posture. He also realized there was a definite lack in fighting spirit among the units in the Eighth Army, and before any offensive operations could take place, he needed to ensure it had the proper fighting spirit, pride in itself, confidence in its leadership, and faith in its mission.²

Ridgway decided to conduct an assessment of all his frontline units and within days had personally spoken face to face with each one of his corps and division commanders. What he found gave him grave concern about the Eighth Army's ability to switch to the

offensive, but with dogged determination he slowly brought the offensive spirit back into the soldiers of all nations fighting in Korea.

Had Ridgway truly been able to conduct operations as he wanted to from the beginning, he would have immediately opened a counteroffensive in an attempt to regain the initiative lost in the previous months of fighting. Ridgway's philosophy was to fight the Korean War from a force-oriented perspective, rather than a terrain-oriented fight which had been the predominant objective until Ridgway's arrival. Ridgway believed that as long as the Chinese forces did not possess the strength to defeat UN forces and by focusing friendly operational efforts on the destruction of the enemy and his equipment, successful prosecution of the war would be inevitable.

In the last week of 1950 and early weeks of 1951, even if the fighting spirit of Eighth Army had been to Ridgway's liking, UN forces were not in a position to go on the counteroffensive. Many units were still in the process of rebuilding their strength after the CCF Offensive of November and December or, as in the case of X Corps, still reorganizing after its amphibious passage out of Wonsan to Pusan. The ROKA I, II, and III Corps, were still in their positions in the mountains holding a line running west to east along the 38th Parallel from Highway 3A in the west to Yangyang on the eastern coast. Little in the way of unit positioning had changed since Ridgway assumed command of the Eighth Army and with the exception of the movement of one US division to provide protection against an interdiction of supply routes in the Wonju area, units continued to prepare their thinly held positions as shown in figure 8.

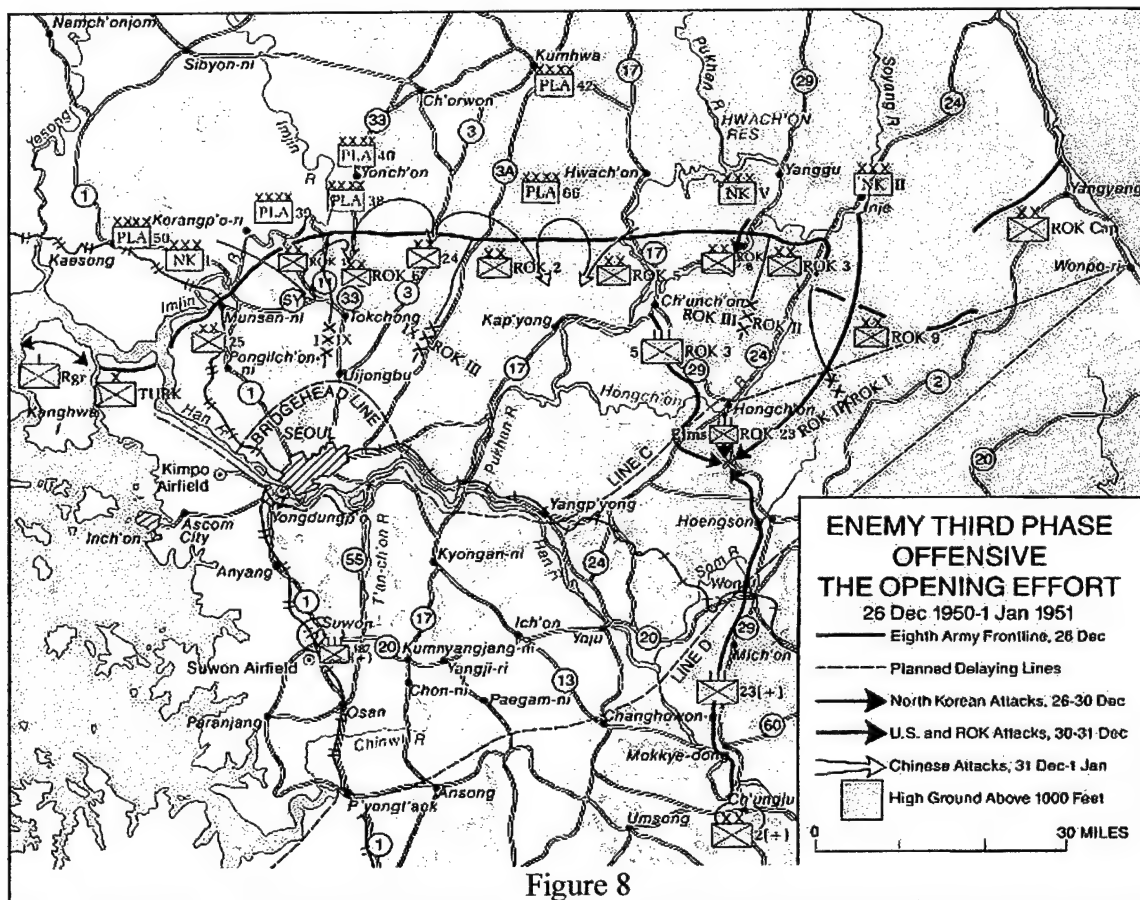


Figure 8

Intelligence estimates by the Eighth Army staff had closely predicted the strength and disposition of enemy forces, and on the evening of 31 December, the Chinese launched their Third Phase Offensive. This offensive, which was to last approximately one week would force Ridgway to withdraw his forces south of the Han River and turn control of the country's capital over to the North Koreans for the second time in six months. Because of his assessment of the fighting spirit of the soldiers assigned to the Eighth Army, and the fact that his initial lack of confidence in the leadership of the Eighth Army and its ability to instill a willingness to fight, Ridgway ordered a general withdrawal along the entire front.

Ridgway's order to withdraw, however, would be disappointing to him since the order would be contrary to his initial intent of attacking or at least standing fast along the 38th parallel. He realized the order was necessary to maintain the tactical integrity of the Eighth Army as well as holding a unified front across the peninsula. Ridgway's order called for commanders to conduct strong delaying actions as they orderly withdrew their forces to the south. Though continued enemy pressure would further force Ridgway to withdraw the Eighth Army Forces southward, first to Line C and then to Line D, he never lost sight of the offensive spirit he believed laid within all soldiers in the Eighth Army.

After the Eighth Army had established positions along Line D, an immediate need, as Ridgway saw it, was to identify the strength and locations of the NKPA and Chinese forces. Earlier briefings received by Ridgway had led him to identify significant shortcomings in the intelligence collection arena. In one instance, a map merely showed a large goose egg with the number 174,000 in its center. To correct this deficiency, he ordered all units in the Eighth Army to increase the number and size of patrols in each one of the corps sectors. As he put it, he did not want any soldier in his command to not know where a trail in his sector might lead to or what enemy forces might lie down that trail.

Clearly, the Eighth Army needed a better picture of what the enemy was doing and where they were located. Ridgway understood that given the current condition of the Eighth Army, the lack of confidence in its leadership and the sagging morale due to the withdrawals of the past two months, large-scale reconnaissance missions across the army front would likely not be productive. Instead, he decided to take small steps in determining enemy strength and disposition which would work to turn the Eighth Army

offensive spirit around. To this end, Ridgway directed the I Corps to execute Operation Wolfhound. Three ROK battalions participated in Wolfhound, one from the ROK 1st Division and two from the ROK 6th Division in the IX Corps sector. The 2nd Battalion, 12th Regiment of the ROK 1st Division, and the 3rd Battalion, 7th Regiment of the ROK 6th Division, were to link up to the south and southeast of Kumyangjang-ni and establish a blocking position. Athwart the I and IX Corps boundaries, the mission aptly suited the two battalions. Their mission was to provide flank security for I Corps' eastern flank near the town of Kumyangjang-ni which held significant crossroads leading east-west between Suwon and Ich'on and north-south between Ansong and Seoul. As part of the mission, Ridgway's guidance of inflicting maximum damage on the enemy still applied. The 2nd Battalion of the 1st Division and the 3rd Battalion of the 6th Division advanced north along Highway 17 to Ch'on-ri, just south of Kumyangjang-ni and established their blocking position. While the two battalions had met their objective and secured the right flank of the I Corps, they did not encounter even light resistance with the enemy south of Kumyangjang-ni.³

In the IX Corps sector, Major General Coulter initiated a reconnaissance in force to determine enemy disposition to his front. This effort, known as Task Force Johnson, produced relatively the same intelligence as Wolfhound. The 6th ROK Division had no change in mission during this operation; however, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment of the 6th ROK Division, received reinforcements from the Corps reserve in the form of elements from the 70th Tank Battalion. Like the 7th Regiment's 3rd Battalion, the 2nd Battalion secured its objective at Paegam-ri and met almost no resistance from the enemy. Despite killing over 1,400 enemy troops, Wolfhound and its IX Corps equivalent, Task Force

Johnson, were still small-scale operations.⁴ The regimental-sized reconnaissance in force missions revealed no significant enemy occupation of the terrain south of the Suwon to Kumyangjang-ni road in the I Corps sector and south of the Yangji-ri to Yoju road in the IX Corps sector. Though Wolfhound and Task Force Johnson were considered a success by Ridgway, Coulter, and Milburn; Ridgway considered them a success for a completely different reason. In Ridgway's eyes, the intelligence information these operations gathered was secondary to the increase in the Eighth Army's will to attack and in the strengthening of the soldier's morale.⁵

Operation Thunderbolt and Roundup

Ridgway was not wholly satisfied with the results though. Wolfhound had produced some results, but not the results Ridgway expected or wanted. Furthermore, air reconnaissance missions reported continuous troop movements south of the Han River but could not confirm any large-scale enemy deployment in the region. Increased ground reconnaissance in the area also revealed nothing of any significance, other than a lack of large-scale enemy troop occupations south of the Han River.⁶ Resolving the questions he had would take Ridgway more than the small-scale reconnaissance in force operations conducted by the corps. To accomplish this, Ridgway came up with Operation Thunderbolt. Thunderbolt called for each corps to use a division plus sized element to conduct large-scale reconnaissance in force missions in their zones to identify the strength and disposition of enemy forces. Thunderbolt would be a controlled advance along successive phase lines by the I and X Corps with the intent of pressing to the Han River

before the Eighth Army would launch its counterattack towards the 38th parallel (figure 9).

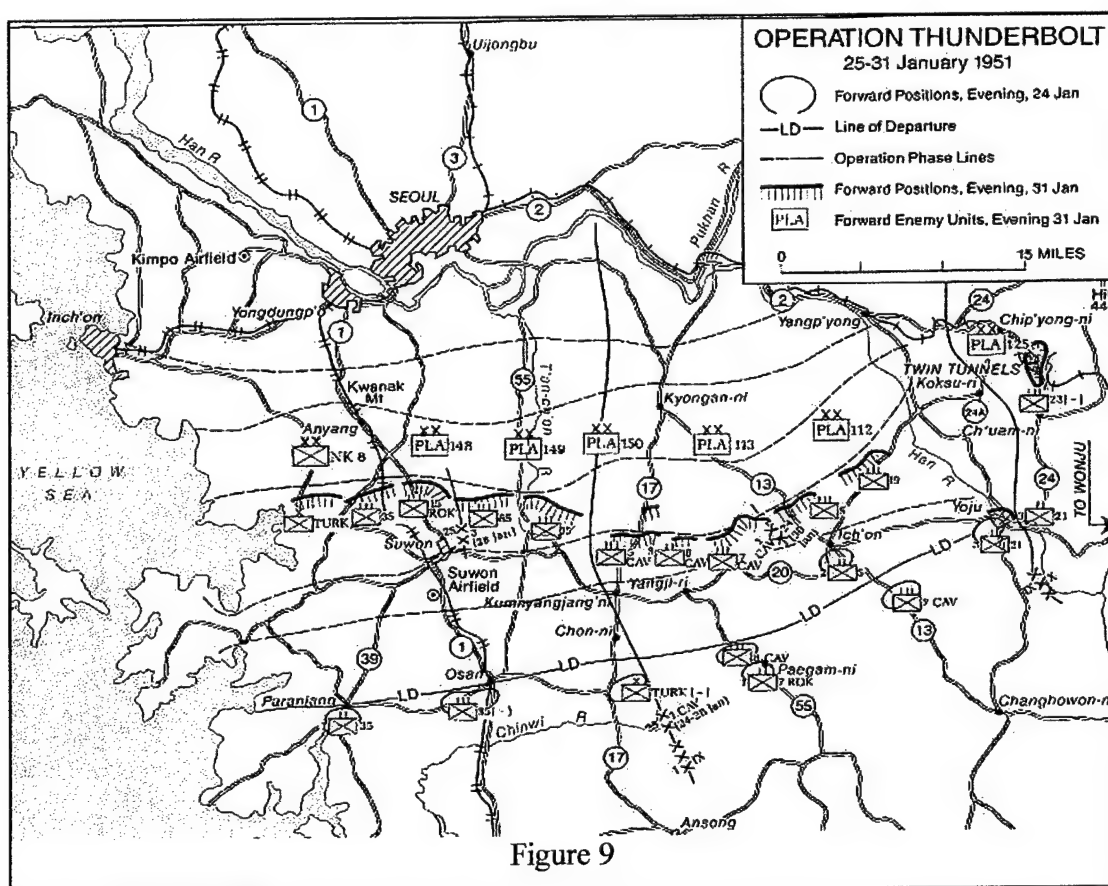


Figure 9

In I Corps, the only ROK unit was the ROK 1st Division, still commanded by Brigadier General Paik. I Corps' mission was to "conduct strong combat reconnaissance in zone using one infantry division with attached armor inflicting maximum destruction of enemy personnel and equipment"⁷ Milburn's intent was to have two of his divisions, the US 3rd and 25th, advance abreast of each other, much like the Eighth Army's plan for the I and IX Corps'. The 1st ROK Division would have its 15th Regiment attached to the

25th Division while its other two regiments were to provide a covering force along Thunderbolt's line of departure and secure the lines of communication between Suwon and Taejon.⁸ After the recent losses of personnel and equipment taken by the ROK 1st Division during the Chinese New Year Offensive, the ROK 1st Division was still not in a position to conduct large-scale offensive or semioffensive operations. As part of the general withdrawal ordered by Ridgway, the 1st ROK Division had one tank company, a medium truck battalion, and a field artillery battalion of direct support 155-millimeter cannons attached. Personnel levels were still low, and the transportation assets from the 89th Medium Truck Battalion attached to them by Milburn during the general withdrawal of early January, had returned to their original unit.⁹ Even with the artillery and armored assets still attached, the 1st ROK Division as a whole could not have withstood a significant counterattack by either the CCF or the NKPA had they participated as part of the reconnaissance in force mission for the division. The lack of personnel and the shortage of available transportation assets in the division kept the mobility of the division below a level which would have supported Thunderbolt.

Though unprepared to conduct division-level operations, the 1st ROK Division's 15th Regiment stood ready to participate in Thunderbolt. Attached to the US 25th Division, the 15th Regiment's objective was to attack Morak-san (Morak Mountain) located east of the town of Ansan. With its attached armor, the regiment commenced its attack on 31 January but was forced to shift to a defensive posture after learning the US 35th Regiment to its left was delayed in attacking its objective.¹⁰ Once the 35th Regiment was able to resume its offensive, the 15th Regiment commenced its attack on Morak-san. By 4 February, after fierce hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, the 15th Regiment had

captured Morak-san and was positioned along a line seven miles to the north and northeast of Ansan.¹¹

Following its success in taking Morak-san, the 15th regiment received the order to continue north with the objective of taking Kwanak-san. Kwanak-san was a mountain just south of the Han River which the enemy held as its last defensive stronghold south of Seoul by emplacing numerous automatic weapons and mortars. On 9 February, despite the strongly defended hill, bad weather, and rugged terrain, the 15th Regiment occupied the hill through close internal coordination and use of attached armor assets. Its success against the enemy was so complete that the 15th Regiment quickly resumed its northward movement and by day's end on 10 February, it established a position on the south side of the Han River and completed its linkup with the US 3rd Division.¹²

Like Milburn's I Corps, Major General Coulter's IX Corps had only one ROK division assigned to its command. As part of Operation Thunderbolt, the IX Corps' mission was to "conduct strong combat reconnaissance in zone for the purpose of developing enemy dispositions in the area, disrupting hostile concentrations, and inflicting maximum destruction of enemy personnel and materiel."¹³ Coulter's intent was to use the 1st Cavalry Division as the main effort of the operation. This unit would conduct a majority of the reconnaissance along the entire front with support from the 24th Division in the form of an infantry battalion task force complete with a battery of artillery and one tank company. The 6th ROK Division would act as part of the overall supporting effort though operations along the corps' west flank. As part of the mission, the 6th ROK Division would "continue to maintain one infantry battalion as a covering force in positions generally northwest of Paegam-ni as well as positioning one infantry battalion to

assist the 1st Cavalry Division in securing Kumyangjang-ni.”¹⁴ According to the IX Corps Operations Order for Thunderbolt, the 6th ROK Division did not have any attached support for the operation. This is not surprising, however, given the 1st Cavalry Division’s area in which they were to conduct their reconnaissance. Like the 1st ROK Division, the 6th Division had also experienced a devastating blow from the Chinese New Year’s Eve Offensive and the following withdrawal to Line D. Only recently, the 6th ROK Division had received 2,300 new replacements to make up for the loss of personnel in the previous months.¹⁵ Even with the arrival of new personnel, the 6th Division was still not in a position to conduct large-scale offensive operations and for the remainder of Thunderbolt and continued to man its assigned blocking positions.¹⁶

In the central region of the peninsula, between the US IX Corps and the ROK III Corps, sat the US X Corps under the command of Major General Almond. The X Corps, unlike the I and IX Corps, had significantly more ROKA forces attached. In addition to the US 2nd Division, 7th Division, and 187th Regimental Combat Team, it also had the ROK III Corps, and ROK 5th and 8th Divisions.¹⁷ In accordance with Ridgway’s directives, the US X Corps was “in conjunction with the I and III ROK Corps to attack to destroy enemy in zone, employing the 5th and 8th ROK Divisions.”¹⁸ This mission would become known as Operation Roundup.

Facing the US X Corps and the ROK III Corps were the NKPA II and V Corps. To disrupt the NKPA V Corps and II Corps Major General Almond developed a coordinated advance with the ROK III Corps. Almond proposed to Ridgway a flanking operation using the ROK 5th and 8th Divisions against Hongch’on. The 5th Division would proceed north out of Hoengsong through the mountains and attack Honch’on from

the east. The 8th Division would move along highways 29 and 2-24 to attack from the south and southwest (figure 10). General Almond supported these attacks with significant reinforcements from his two divisions and the Regimental Combat Team. From the US 2nd Division, the 8th ROK Division received a reinforced artillery battalion, an automatic weapons battery, and a mechanized infantry battalion in support.¹⁹

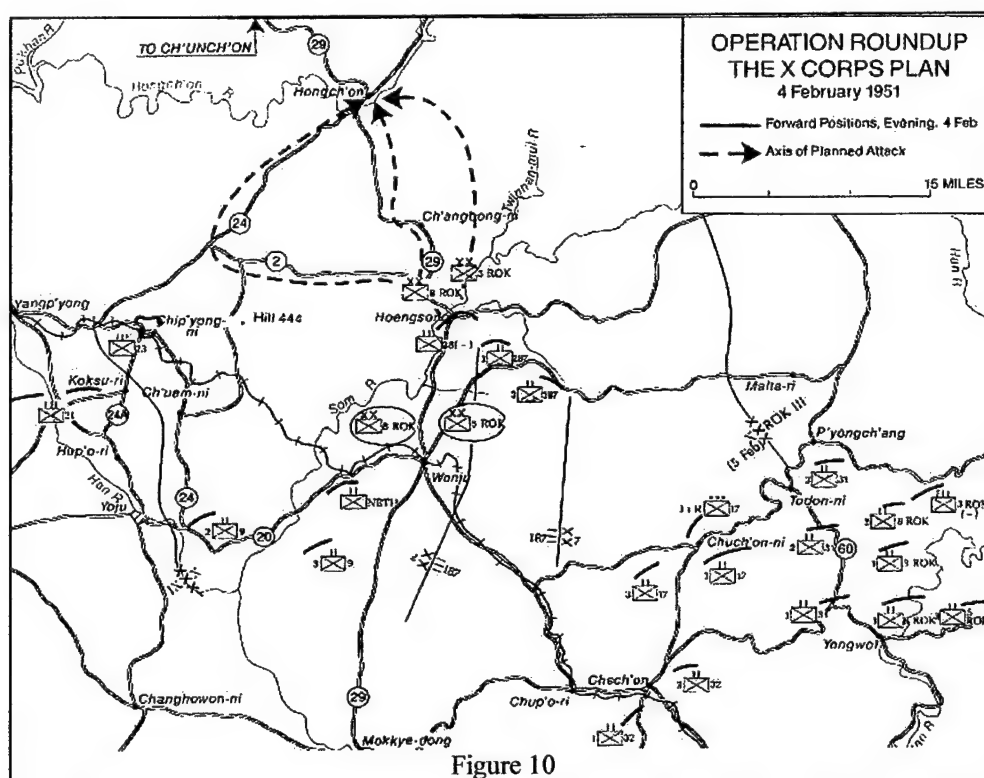


Figure 10

In the east, the ROK 5th Division received support from the US 7th Division in form of Task Force 7. Task Force 7 brought to the 5th Division a package of US support similar to what the 8th ROK Division received from the 2nd Division. Additionally, five armored teams, two each from the 2nd and 7th US Divisions and one from the 187th Regimental Combat Team, consisting of a company of infantry and a platoon of tanks, were designated to support the efforts of the 5th and 8th ROK Divisions.²⁰ Ridgway

approved the plan on 1 February but reminded Almond that the overriding tactical consideration as long as Thunderbolt was still ongoing was the protection of IX Corps' right flank. The day prior to the commencement of Roundup, Ridgway shifted the ROK III Corps boundary to the west to assign the ROK III Corps more of the terrain north of P'yongch'ang. By doing this Ridgway aligned the ROK III Corps against the bulk of the NKPA II Corps while the 5th and the 8th ROK Divisions would assault the NKPA V Corps in the Hoengsong-Hongch'on area.²¹ On 5 February 1951 Operation Roundup began.

For the first five days of the operation, there was only sporadic and light-to-medium resistance by the enemy. Unlike the measures taken by the I and IX Corps during Thunderbolt to clear enemy pockets of resistance as forces proceeded north, the X Corps attack units could not clear enemy forces to the same degree. The rugged terrain forced the 5th and 8th ROK Divisions to maneuver in columns along whatever trails or roads were available. Physical contact between elements of the divisions was rare, especially the 8th Division whose course took them along two divergent avenues of approach. After the third day of the operation, Almond felt the attack on Hongch'on was as much a battle against the terrain as it was the enemy and that the success of the operation depended on overcoming the terrain limitations on infantry and armor maneuver as well as placement of forward artillery.²²

The difficulties the terrain posed against maneuver, left the 5th and the 8th ROK Divisions partially without the support elements assigned to them by Almond. Increasing intelligence reports were also showing an eastward movement of enemy forces into the X Corps area. Almond considered using the 2nd ROK Division, the X Corps reserve, to

support the 8th Division's effort, but the reserve was simply too weak from the losses they suffered during the CCF New Year Offensive. On 8 February X Corps asked for and received the 3rd ROK Division to use as part of the operation. Almond committed the 3rd Division to the attack on Hoengsong and relieved the 5th ROK Division in the east, who had encountered a large force of approximately 4,000 North Koreans.²³ This allowed the 8th ROK Division to consolidate its forces to allow for a full-divisional strength attack. As the 5th and the 3rd Divisions adjusted their positions, the 8th ROK Division detected a large CCF contingent believed to be of divisional strength. The 8th Division commander recommended to Almond that the division establish a defensive posture. Underestimating the capabilities and strength of Chinese forces in the 8th Division's sector, Almond denied the 8th commander's request.²⁴

On the night of 11 February, NKPA and Chinese forces launched a massive assault against the X Corps front. The ROK 8th Division was at the center of this attack and took the heaviest casualties. The division was forced to pull back and attempted to reconsolidate in the vicinity of Hoensong.²⁵ The assault by Chinese and NKPA forces was such that it would literally destroy the 8th Division.²⁶ As the 8th Division disintegrated in the onslaught, it had a ripple effect which spread throughout the corps front. The ROK 3rd Division was located on the right flank of the 8th Division and quickly collapsed in much the same manner as the 8th Division had. On the eastern portion of the X Corps front, the ROK 5th Division held its position until it was under threat of encirclement.²⁷ Command and control amongst engaged units quickly broke down, and confusion among troops reigned. This attack, which became known as the Battle for Hoengsong, would last for only two days, but it forced Almond to give up all the terrain he had taken as part

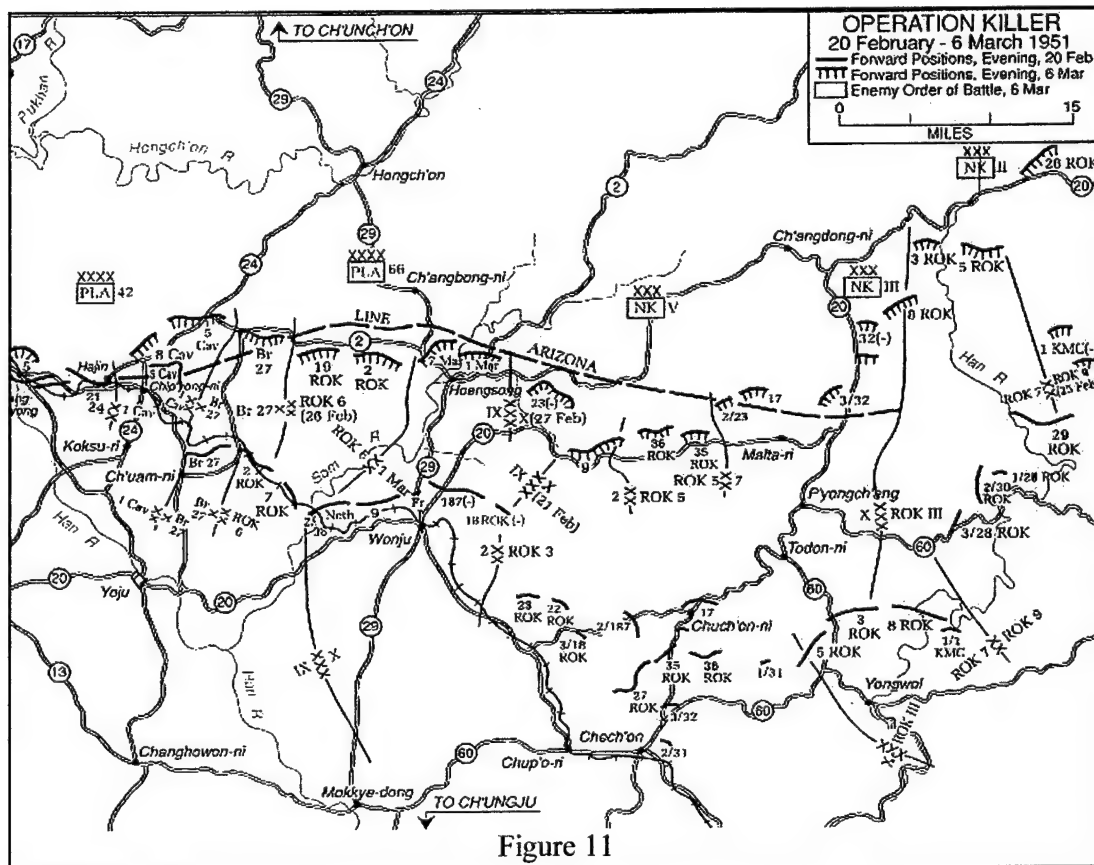
of Operation Roundup. What started out as an operation of reconnaissance in force to clear enemy elements between successive phase lines turned into a devastating failure for ROK forces and a huge loss in personnel and equipment for X Corps. The nature of the losses was so grave that General Ridgway directed his Inspector General to investigate all "the circumstances attending to the loss by X Corps artillery pieces and other major items of equipment on or about 12 February 1951."²⁸ Given the nature and ferocity of the enemy attacks it was difficult to completely determine the number of personnel killed, wounded, or missing. Likewise, it was equally difficult to determine exact equipment losses. In the end, the costs were horrific in lives, especially for the South Koreans. In the two days of fighting, the ROKA lost in excess of 9,800 men (table 4) and almost 1,500 major pieces of equipment in the Battle for Hoengsong.

Table 4. X Corps Personnel Losses--Operation Roundup		
Unit		Total
ROK		
3rd Division	-----	1,238
5th Division	-----	1,141
8th Division	-----	7,465
Total ROKA	-----	9,844
US/UN		
2nd Division	-----	1,769
7th Division	-----	190
187th RCT	-----	59
Total US/UN	-----	2,018
Total	-----	11,682

Source: Billy C. Mossman, *US Army in the Korean War: Ebb and Flow, November 1950 to July 1951* (Washington DC: Center for Military History, 1990), 279.

Operation Killer and Ripper

The attacks by the NKPA and Chinese forces against Eighth Army's X Corps were devastating but did little to diminish Ridgway's dedication to keep the enemy off balance. By the time the enemy advance has culminated, a salient twenty miles into the X Corps area left an exposed flank on the east of the US IX Corps and on the west of the ROK III Corps. Even as Operation Roundup wound down, Ridgway's staff was in the process of coming up with new offensive plans. One plan, named Operation Killer, was designed to clear the Chinese from the Chip'yong-ni area and the mountains to the southeast as far as the Som River (Line ARIZONA) (figure 11).



The enemy's offensive, however, had run out of steam by 18 February. Realizing this, Ridgway seized upon this opportunity to initiate Killer and attack while the Chinese were most vulnerable. By this time the Communists had expended most of their food supplies and ammunition, were suffering from the extreme cold, and were faced with an ever-increasing threat of disease. Facing these conditions, the enemy withdrew its forces from the front lines so quickly that reconnaissance patrols found large quantities of abandoned Chinese and North Korean equipment.²⁹

Prior to Operation Killer, Ridgway's greatest concerns were the exact locations of the enemy reserves, their morale, status of their supplies, and troop movement trends with the exception of already known movements. With the exception of isolated pieces of intelligence to the immediate front of Eighth Army, which had been gathered from captured prisoners, the Eighth Army had an intelligence void as to the information needed to conduct Killer. As a result, the Eighth Army had to initiate Killer without information as to the enemy's reserve locations or when he would commit them. Fully understanding this, Ridgway made the assumption that the enemy could commit his reserves within twenty-four hours and warned the corps commanders not to be too hasty on the offense and to be sure to use the terrain to their advantage. Ridgway further stressed that control of maneuver and coordination to the right and left were paramount and that the link between adjacent units must be maintained. Finally, Ridgway warned his commanders to avoid being sucked into an enemy trap--by ruse or as a result of aggressiveness--to be destroyed piecemeal.³⁰

Killer, much like its name implies, was not a terrain-oriented operation. Ridgway was oft heard saying that he was interested only in inflicting maximum casualties on the

enemy with minimum losses to UN forces. On 21 February, three days after the enemy offensive had stalled, Ridgway launched Killer. In order to destroy the enemy, the Eighth Army planned to use the IX and X Corps as the defeat mechanisms while the I Corps in the west would protect the Eighth Army's left flank and prepare to cross the Han River, and the ROK III and I Corps would protect the eastern flank.

In the I Corps sector the ROK 1st Division had a relatively easy mission of clearing enemy forces in the sector below the Han River and protecting special and bridge construction teams in the I Corps zone as they prepared to support a river crossing.³¹ To support this mission, Milburn added significantly to the 1st ROK Division's available assets. From the US 3rd Division, Paik received the 10th FA Battalion and two batteries from the 9th FA Battalion. Additionally, Milburn attached the 151st Engineer Battalion, the 58th Treadway Bridge Company, and A Co 114th Engineers. Since the majority of enemy forces had retreated to the north of the Han River by this time, the ROK 1st Division met only light resistance and easily advanced to its limit on the Han River.

In the IX Corps sector the ROK 6th Division was to move on line with the 1st Cavalry Division and the British 27th Brigade and clear the mountains of any enemy forces.³² Just like in the I Corps sector, only light resistance was met as the units advanced northwards. Though enemy resistance was light, the weather and mountains proved to be the greatest foe. Trudging through the mud over steep terrain the 6th ROK Division would finally arrive at its object just south of Highway 2 on Line ARIZONA by 6 March. In reality, during Operation Killer, the division experienced greater difficulty moving through the rugged terrain under the prevailing early thaw than they did against the enemy's forces.³³

In the X Corps sector things were not much different. The ROK 3rd Division was a secondary effort for the corps, covering the right flank of the 1st Marine Division. The objectives of the 3rd ROK Division were a series of small hills north of Highway 20 along Line ARIZONA. At the time the division was to initiate its attack, the area had enemy forces and guerilla forces as well. This posed some problems for the 3rd Division, as it had more than 2,000 new recruits that delayed it from achieving its objectives by a couple of days. By the beginning of March, the resistance of enemy units began to increase across the entire front of the X Corps. This effort by the enemy was short lived and by the 5th of March, North Korean troops withdrew and abandoned their positions along Line ARIZONA allowing for an uneventful occupation by the 3rd Division.³⁴

The Eighth Army's operation progressed smoothly, and there were relatively few losses on the part of UN forces. Over the two weeks during which Killer took place, the IX and X Corps had established their positions along Line ARIZONA, and both corps reported killing significant numbers of enemy personnel. Killer's advance with the IX and X Corps turned out to be not so much an offensive attack against Chinese and NKPA forces as it had one of a coordinated clearing operation where the main enemy seemed to be the terrain and poor weather. In the end Killer was successful in achieving the forward positioning of Eighth Army units Ridgway wanted; however, it failed to live up to its name through the destruction of large numbers of enemy forces.

Immediately following in the wings of Operation Killer, Ridgway had Operation Ripper which would run from 6 to 31 March. Ripper, like Killer and Thunderbolt before it, was an expansion of the previous plans and had the same basic goals as all of Ridgway's early plans in Korea. The Eighth Army's mission in Ripper was to "attack

through successive phase lines to seize the towns of Hongch'on and Ch'unch'on and destroy enemy forces, materiel and supplies south of the general Line IDAHO."³⁵ Unlike earlier operations, Ripper identified the two key towns of Hongch'on and Ch'unch'on that controlled key road junctions in the area as well as being important supply centers.³⁶

With the exception of I Corps, Ripper was to be a northward attack across the entire Eighth Army front (figures 12 and 13). In relative distance to be traveled, the US IX Corps would have the greatest distance to travel, the US X Corps in the center had the next furthest distance to travel, and the ROK I and III Corps were either already on line or had approximately five miles to advance. The US I Corps had already reached the Han River and was to remain generally in position with the exception of a portion of mountainous terrain north of the Han River to the east of Seoul.

On the east coast, the ROK I and III Corps were to attack the relatively short distance to reach Line IDAHO. Though only a short distance, these two corps needed additional support to make the advance north to establish positions along Line IDAHO. To ensure these two corps had the greatest chance for success, Ridgway made significant changes to their order of battle. The ROK I Corps was released from the US X Corps and returned to the east coast with the 9th and Capital Divisions. The III Corps regained control of the ROK 3rd Division from the X Corps and the ROK 5th Division, which had been reorganized since its February losses in Roundup, was attached to the X Corps.³⁷ Since the ROK I Corps had already established positions along Line IDAHO, it continued to consolidate its position and made only minor adjustments in its line to better prepare itself for the time when it would resume its northward momentum. While undergoing these preparations, the ROK I Corps encountered a problem. The remnants of the NKPA

10th Division, cut off in the Eighth Army's rear area since January, began a breakout operation in an attempt to return to the north. The NKPA 10th Division reorganized some 2,000 stragglers and guerillas and moved north through the ROK I Corps sector. The additional forces given to the ROK I Corps allowed the corps commander to detach a division-sized element from Line IDAHO in order to clean up what was left of the NKPA 10th Division.³⁸ This effort was to take ten days, and by the time the NKPA 10th had made its way through UN units and returned to the north, it had fewer than 1,000 men remaining.³⁹ Had Ridgway not adjusted the Eighth Army order of battle to bolster the strength of the army right flank, it was likely the NKPA 10th Division would have caused significant additional losses on an already weak corps thereby weakening the entire right portion of the Eighth Army front.

While the ROK I Corps dealt with the NKPA 10th in its rear area, General Ridgway ordered the next phase of Ripper. For the ROK I and III Corps this was an uneventful phase of Operation Ripper. With the support of the Navy, who provided naval gunfire from off the coast, the two corps conducted successful mop-up operations against brigade-sized units. On 25 March, both corps received an order to proceed to Line CAIRO as quickly as possible (figure 12). Within two days, the two corps secured the portion of Line CAIRO which fell in their sectors and commenced further mop-up operations of bypassed enemy units.

On the western portion of the army front, the US I Corps had essentially two missions, protection of the IX Corps western flank and the security of the Port of Inch'on. Protection of the port was given to the ROK 1st Division. Having moved into position southwest of Seoul during Operation Killer and being now at nearly full strength, the ROK

1st Division was already in position and was easily the best unit in I Corps to protect the five-hundred to six-hundred tons of supplies coming in to the port on a daily basis (figure 13).⁴⁰ Not needing any additional external support to execute the mission made command and control across the corps that much simpler for Milburn. During the latter portion of the first phase of Ripper, the ROK 1st received a battalion of amphibious assault vehicles along with a large quantity of rubber boats and other river-crossing equipment. The unit conducted extensive training on river-crossing operations and urban warfare and after conducting reconnaissance operations in Seoul to determine the enemy was abandoning the city, Paik approached Milburn for permission to enter Seoul. Milburn gave the approval and on 15 March, elements of the 1st ROK Division crossed the Han River and occupied the capital.⁴¹ This would be the last time UN forces would have to take back control of the capital. After the 1st ROK Division completed clearing the capital, it participated on Operation Courageous. Courageous, and its airborne counterpart Tomahawk, was an operation that included a linkup between the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team and the 1st Division. On 23 March, the 187th would parachute into drop zones in the vicinity of Munsan to block any enemy forces retreating north out of Seoul while the 1st Division, accompanied by a battalion of attached tanks, would move north to link up with them. The objective of the plan was to parachute behind the retreating NKPA I Corps and catch an estimated 6,000 enemy soldiers in a net. The 187th would act as the blocking force while the 1st Division would crush NKPA forces as they retreated north. However, the NKPA retreated rapidly and the 1st ROK Division advanced steadily towards Munsan-ni without any enemy contact. By midmorning on 24 March, elements of the 1st ROK Division entered Munsan-ni and linked up with the 187th

Regimental Combat Team. Conducting a series of wide sweeps around the Munsan-ni area identified that only small pockets of resistance remained in the area. The expected NKPA forces had escaped the net leaving the 187th to contend with destroying only one regiment. At the end of Ripper, the US I Corps found itself positioned along the south side of Line BENTON that ran roughly along the Imjin River.

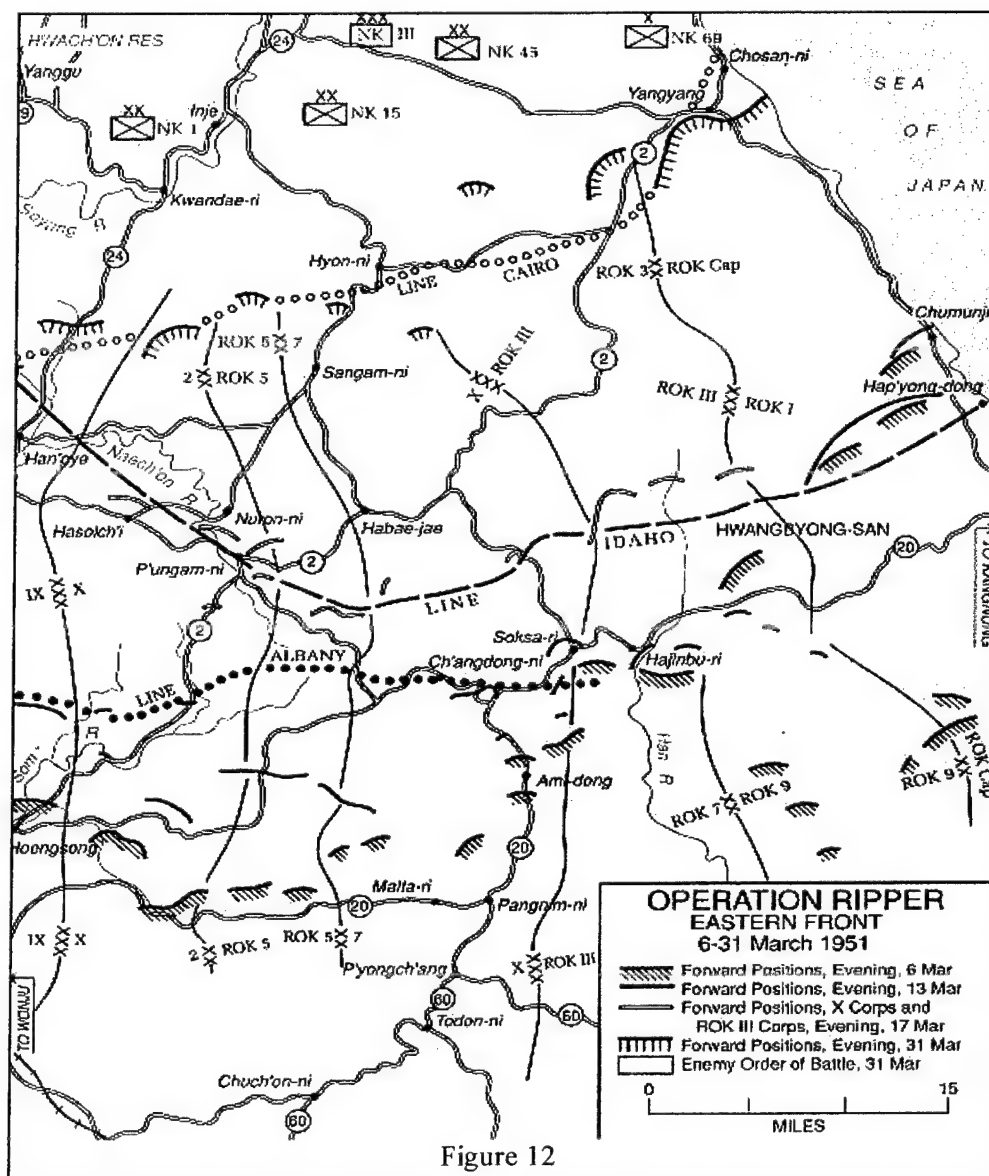


Figure 12

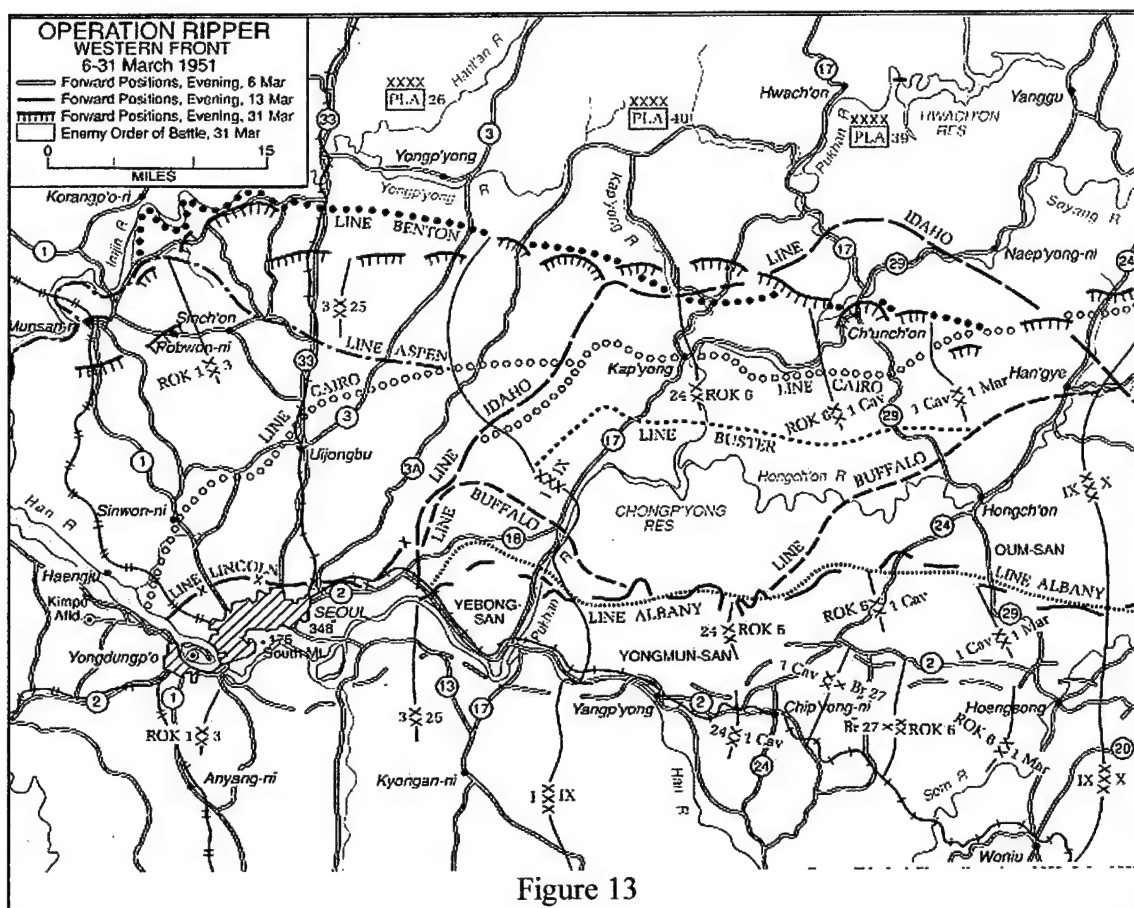


Figure 13

In the center, the US IX and X Corps were preparing to move north in successive phase lines to Line ALBANY. Both corps were to advance on line until reaching Line IDAHO seizing key terrain within the corps sector. The IX Corps still maintained control over the US 1st Marine Division, 1st Cavalry Division, 24th Infantry Division and the ROK 6th Division. The X Corps order of battle had changed slightly since Ridgway made his adjustments just prior to Ripper. Under this change, the X Corps now controlled the US 2nd and 7th Divisions and the ROK 5th Division.⁴²

In the IX Corps sector, the ROK 6th Division was to clear the area between highways 24 and 29 north of the Seoul-Wonju rail line. After completing clearing

operations and on order from the corps, the 6th Division would shift their location to the northwest between the 24th Division and the 1st Cavalry Division. At this point the division would attack to destroy the enemy in their zone south of phase lines BUFFALO and CAIRO and Line IDAHO. To support this mission, General Smith⁴³ assigned the mission of providing reinforcing fires to the 2nd FA Rocket Battery.⁴⁴ On 16 March, General Hoge, the new corps commander, ordered the corps to continue the advance. The 6th ROK Division fought a series of seesaw battles for two days. At this point, the enemy's resistance grew weaker, and the 6th Division advanced and occupied Lines BUFFALO, CAIRO, and IDAHO on successive days. By the 21st of March the division had reached its objective and established positions in the mountains west of Ch'unch'on along Line IDAHO.⁴⁵

In the X Corps sector, things were different for the ROK 5th Division. The division was given the mission of clearing a series of mountains that bisected the corps sector. In accordance with the X Corps plan, the 5th ROK Division was to attack in zone and destroy enemy south of Line ALBANY and on order advance to Line IDAHO.⁴⁶ The area in which the 5th Division had to operate was known to have an enemy that was dug into the mountains. For three days straight at the beginning of Ripper, the 5th Division fought hard against the well-dug-in NKPA forces. Each time the division mounted an assault, the enemy held strong and repulsed the attack. By 11 March, reports from enemy prisoners revealed that the main body was withdrawing and that remaining forces were to fight strong delaying actions. The fierce resistance was part of the enemy plan to cover the withdrawal. According to other statements given by the prisoners, the main elements of the NKPA II, III and V Corps had already withdrawn north of the 38th parallel and

were now conducting maintenance and preparations for a new offensive.⁴⁷ On the morning of 14 March, the 5th Division arrived at Line ALBANY one day behind the US 2nd and 7th Divisions.⁴⁸ The next three days would bring a rapid advancement of more than twenty miles not only for the 5th ROK Division, but for the X Corps as well. On 17 March, the ROK 5th Division as well as the 2nd and 7th US Divisions closed on Line IDAHO.⁴⁹ For the X Corps, Operation Ripper was over.

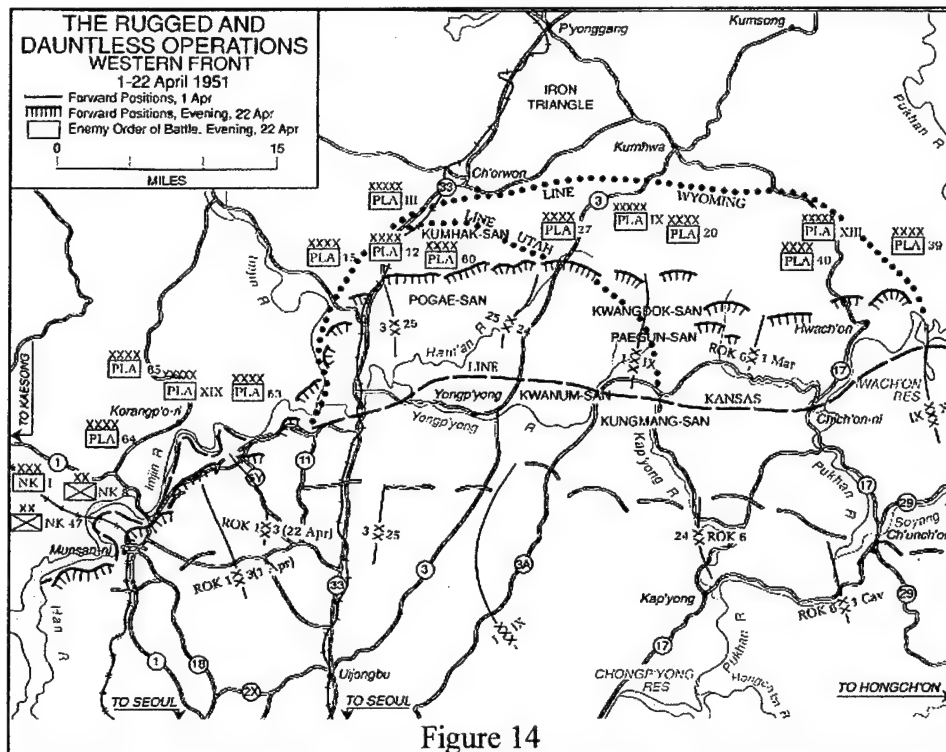
Operations Rugged and Dauntless

With the completion of Operation Ripper, the Eighth Army established itself along the 38th parallel for the second time in three months. Since the ROK and UN forces advanced to the 38th parallel in a relatively smooth progress, Ridgway now looked for a new strategy that would provide the framework for the Eighth Army to conduct future operations north of the parallel. As timing would have it, the Truman administration and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed on 15 March that the objective in Korea must be to settle the problem in a two-pronged fashion. The first involved establishing a unified and independent nation, and the second involved repelling aggression and restoring peace.⁵⁰ Therefore, the guidance Ridgway received from MacArthur was quite simple. Anticipating that a cease-fire might soon be on the horizon and that a stalemate would ultimately develop on the battlefield, MacArthur informed Ridgway that the Eighth Army could conduct major operations above the 38th parallel so long and as far as his logistics could support it.⁵¹

Ridgway had agreed with MacArthur that the war in Korea might develop into a stalemate. Calling his commanders together, Ridgway informed them that the Eighth

would continue to move forward and that the next advance would bring them north of the 38th parallel. Just how far the advance would carry their units into North Korea, Ridgway could not tell them. His plan called for the advancement of the Eighth Army front along its entire length with the exception of a small portion in the I Corps sector. The main effort of the attack was an area known as the Iron Triangle. This area, bounded by the cities of Ch'orwan, Kumhwa, and P'yonggang, provided only one of a handful of large avenues that ran east and west between the Taebaek Mountains. Containing both railways and roadways supporting movement in all four cardinal directions, the Iron Triangle was of extreme importance to the enemy as it formed the hub for the movement of troops and supplies within the forward area as well as to enhance coordinating operations laterally.⁵²

Recent intelligence reports from Ridgway's staff indicated the Chinese and NKPA were planning for a large-scale offensive. Taking this into full consideration, Ridgway planned to advance through successive phase lines along terrain which supported both advancement in the offence as well as providing a location for a strong defense. This was the basis for Operation Rugged. The limit of advance for the operation would be Line KANSAS. Line KANSAS traced the lower bank of the Imjin River until the river turned north. From there it ran eastward until it reached the Hwach'on Reservoir where it turned slightly southeastward until it reached the east coast just north of Yangyang. Like previous operations, Rugged had imbedded in its objectives the destruction of enemy forces, materials, and supplies south of the limit of advance (figure 14).⁵³

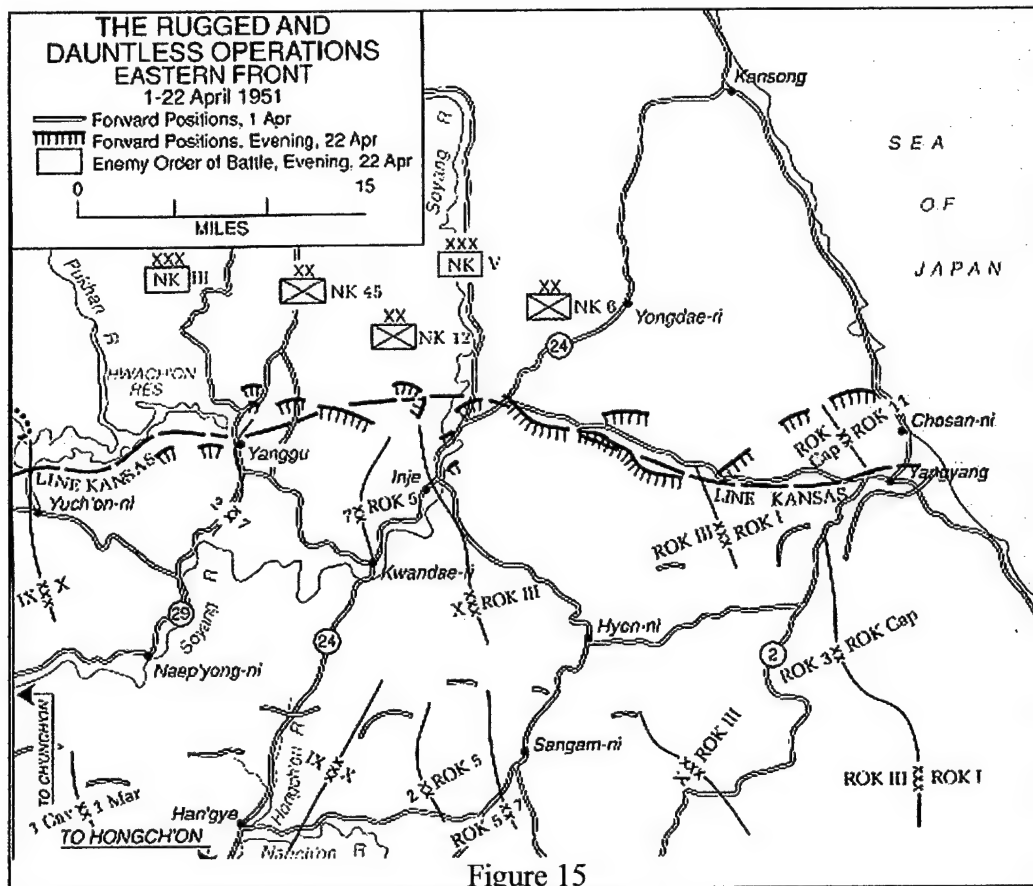


Operation Rugged began on 3 April 1951. As military operations go, Rugged and its successor Dauntless were relatively uneventful operations for ROK forces. With the exception of the ROK 1st Division, the missions of the ROK units which participated in these two operations varied only slightly, with the most significant difference in missions being the objectives. In General Milburn's I Corps sector, the ROK 1st Division was already positioned along the western portion of Line KANSAS. In accordance with I Corps' operation order, the ROK 1st Division was to conduct diversionary attacks north of Munsan-ni and to defend in sector along the Imjin River. For the next three weeks, the ROK 1st Division would continue to operate from their location northeast of Munsan-ni successfully conducting its diversionary attacks.⁵⁴

On the central western front, General Hoge's IX Corps employed the ROK 6th Division in the central section of the corps. The 6th Division was to move on line with the rest of the Corps to secure Line KANSAS by establishing positions just south of the town of Sachang-ni. As with all other units participating in the operation, the 6th Division was to clear any enemy elements which could disrupt the movement of Eighth Army columns as they proceeded to the front to replace troops or deliver supplies. The division made modest advances each day against light enemy resistance, and by the end of the 3rd day of Rugged, a regiment of the 6th Division occupied its position along Line KANSAS, while the division's two remaining regiments occupied positions four miles southeast of Sachang-ni.⁵⁵

The X Corps mission fell directly in line with that of the other corps. As outlined in the X Corps operation order, the X Corps was to attack in zone to destroy enemy forces and seize Line KANSAS.⁵⁶ Due to the limited road network and the rugged terrain in the X Corps area of operations, it would not advance as quickly as the I and IX Corps. Based on this, General Almond adjusted the positions of his forces on 7 April. As part of the repositioning of corps forces, the 5th ROK Division became the corps right flank unit and was assigned as the corps main effort with objective of controlling two key hills north of the town of Inje (figure 15).

The 5th ROK Division commenced their assault on 9 April with an intensive artillery preparation in order to facilitate the Soyang River crossing. Supported by a battalion of artillery from the US 7th Division, a regiment from the ROK 5th Division defeated an enemy force which commanded the crossing site. After securing a bridgehead



on the north side of the river, the division sent its other regiments across. Upon completion of the river crossing, on the division's right front, the ROK 36th Regiment attacked a battalion-sized force which controlled the road from the river to Inje. The regiment, engaged in fierce fighting, launched an all-out final assault against the enemy and, after a day of heavy fighting, dislodged the enemy and advanced to a position two miles north of Inje.⁵⁷ Three days later on 14 April, the 36th renewed its offensive by attacking the town of Wont'ong, five miles north of Inje. Despite a heavy barrage of artillery, the enemy resisted stubbornly and took full advantage of the rugged mountainous

terrain. For the next two days the 36th regiment fought a series of pitched seesaw battles with the enemy before finally establishing positions on Line KANSAS on 17 April.⁵⁸

In the division's western sector, the 35th Regiment, which conducted the divisions river-crossing operation, did not have the same success as the 36th. On 10 April the regiment attacked along a ridgeline to destroy the enemy west of the intersection of Highway 24, which controlled the routes to Inje and Yangu.⁵⁹ For three days, the 35th Regiment continued its attack against the enemy in the mountains west of Highway 24, but by 13 April failed to dislodge them from their positions. On the fourteenth of April, the 35th Regiment renewed its attack and finally succeeded in defeating the enemy after severe losses of its own personnel. As the regiment continued its advance north, it was temporarily delayed by a small enemy counterattack west of Inje.⁶⁰ After successfully defeating the enemy, the regiment continued its advance north, where on 19 April it occupied its position along Line KANSAS just to the west of the 36th regiment.⁶¹

Upon termination of Operations Rugged and Dauntless, the Eighth Army began consolidating its positions when, on 21 April, the Chinese launched their Spring Offensive. For the next month UN forces would fight a series of delaying actions until the enemy's offensive finally came to a halt on 19 May. This offensive would cost UN forces all the gains they had made since Operation Wolfhound began in mid-January. On 1 June, the UN would launch its last major offensive operation of the year. Operation PILEDRIIVER, as it was called, would prove a stunning success, and the Eighth Army would gain back in less than two weeks all the terrain it had lost as a result of the Chinese Spring Offensive.

The Coming of the First Armistice Talks

After defeating the Chinese Spring Offensives in late April and May 1951, the direction of policy discussions on the US military's role in the Korean conflict would change. After much discussion and consultation between the Departments of State and Defense, in mid-May 1951, the National Security Council made its recommendation to the president who approved the new policy direction. In part, the new direction called for movement towards Korea's division into two parts. The objective would be the establishment of a unified, independent, and democratic nation in Korea. This goal would be pursued through political channels and not through military ones. A more immediate objective was the cessation and resolution of the Korean War via an appropriate armistice commission established by the UN. The new policy would also call for the establishment of a border well above the 38th parallel in order for South Korea to maintain sovereignty south of the parallel. Until the establishment of this new border, combat operations were to continue until the objectives could be secured.⁶² Based on this new policy, on 1 June 1951, the JCS would issue to Ridgway a change in the mission of UNC Forces that would shape the conduct of the war for the next two years. Under the new guidance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command:

You will, consistent with the security of forces under your command, inflict maximum personnel and materiel losses on the forces of North Korea and Communist China operating in the geographic boundaries of Korea and adjacent waters, in order to create conditions favorable to a settlement of the Korean Conflict which would as a minimum:

1. Terminate the hostilities under appropriate armistice agreements.
2. Establish authority of the ROK over all Korea south of a northern boundary so located as to facilitate, to the maximum extent possible, both

administrative and military defense, and in no case south of the 38th parallel.

3. Provide for the withdrawal by appropriate stages of non-Korean forces from Korea.
4. Permit the building of sufficient ROK military power to deter or repel a renewed North Korean aggression.⁶³

This new guidance received by Ridgway was much to his liking given the potential future armistice talks. After conferring with his corps and division commanders, Ridgway decided it would be of no benefit to go on the offensive and that the UN should hold its positions along the KANSAS-WYOMING line. Since the KANSAS-WYOMING line traced ground suitable for a strong defense, it was the decision by Ridgway to hold that line and wait for a bid for armistice negotiations from the Chinese and North Koreans. As he saw the situation, Ridgway was reluctant to continue significant offensive operations given the possibility that any terrain captured in the immediate future would potentially have to be turned over to North Korea under the guidelines of an armistice. With this in mind, he saw no need to unnecessarily risk the lives of soldiers assigned to the UN Command by fighting for land they may not keep; thus, he developed a personal policy to "do all that I could to keep our losses at a justifiable minimum."⁶⁴ In line with this decision, Van Fleet began to fortify his positions. Meanwhile, the NKPA and CCF used the respite from attack to recoup heavy losses and to develop defenses opposite the Eighth Army.

The war's first round of armistice negotiations would open up in the first week of July and opposing force strength would consist of roughly 560,000 personnel on each side. Casualties during the first twelve months of the war were enormous on both sides

with both the North and South Korean forces taking the brunt on each side. UN Command forces had taken a total of 294,000 casualties of which 212,000 were South Korean. Estimates of Chinese and NKPA casualties were generally agreed to be around one million with approximately 600,000 of those being North Korean.⁶⁵

With armistice talks on the horizon, combat operations would continue to diminish on a large-scale basis and the Korean War would settle down into a war of outposts. From this point forward in the war, large-scale coalition operations involving US and Republic of Korea Armed Forces would be limited to but a handful. Conduct of the Korean War would shift from focusing on the fight of the Eighth Army and its drive to destroy NKPA and Chinese Communist forces and drive the remnants north of the Yalu River to battalion and regimental operations consisting of reconnaissance in force missions and the capture and recapture of key terrain in their immediately vicinity. This dramatic and almost instantaneous shift in the way the UN prosecuted the war would continue until the signing of the armistice in July of 1953. Thus in June of 1951, UN forces settled into position along Line KANSAS and, with a few exceptions, effectively remained there for the next two years.

¹Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967; New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1967), 84.

²Ibid., 85.

³Billy C. Mossman, *US Army in the Korean War: Ebb and Flow, November 1950 to July 1951* (Washington DC: Center for Military History, 1990), 237-239.

⁴*The Korean War* (Korea: Korea Institute of Military History, 1997), 2: 440-441; and Mossman, 238-240.

⁵*The Korean War*, 2: 441.

⁶Mossman, 240.

⁷I Corps Operation Directive 40, 232200 I January 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁸Ibid.

⁹I Corps Operation Directive 37, 071900 I January 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

¹⁰*The Korean War*, 2: 458.

¹¹“General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 225,” 4 February 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

¹²*The Korean War*, 2: 461; and “General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 232,” 11 February 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

¹³IX Corps Operation Order 11, 232330 I January 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Mossman, 216.

¹⁶“General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 225,” 4 February 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

¹⁷X Corps Operation Plan Roundup, 011200 I February 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹*The Korean War*, 2: 466.

²⁰Mossman, 251.

²¹*The Korean War*, 2: 467-470; and Ridgway, 252.

²²Mossman, 259.

²³Ibid., 261.

²⁴*The Korean War*, 2: 472.

²⁵“General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 233,” 12 February 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

²⁶According to UNC Operation reports in February 1951, the 8th Division completely disintegrated and retreated to an area just to the west of Chechon. As the unit assembled what personnel it could, it was determined that more than 10,200 personnel were either killed or missing. From the remaining personnel, two provisional battalions were formed which averaged fewer than 500 personnel in each. "General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Reports 237 & 238," 16 and 17 February 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

²⁷"General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 233," 12 February 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

²⁸Mossman, 280.

²⁹Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line, The Korean War 1950-1953*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 285.

³⁰Ridgway, 108.

³¹I Corps Operation Directive 45, 101500 I February 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

³²IX Corps Operation Order 13, 21 February 1951; and Mossman, 307.

³³Mossman, 310.

³⁴*The Korean War*, 2: 509.

³⁵IX Corps Operation Order 14, 021500 I March 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

³⁶Mossman, 315.

³⁷*The Korean War*, 2: 535-537; and Mossman, 317.

³⁸Mossman, 321-322.

³⁹*The Korean War*, 2: 542.

⁴⁰Mossman, 317.

⁴¹Sun Yup Paik, *Pusan to Panmunjom* (Virginia: Brassey's, 1992; Brassey's, 1999), 131.

⁴²IX Corps Operation Order 14, 021500 I March 1951; and X Corps Operation Order 16, 021200 I March 1951.

⁴³On 31 January 1951, Major General Coulter was replaced by Major General Moore. Three weeks later Moore was involved in a helicopter accident and died a short while later on 23 February 1951. Major General Smith, the 1st Marine Division commander, assumed temporary command of the corps until he officially relinquished command on 5 March to Major General Hoge. James I. Matray, *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 556.

⁴⁴IX Corps Operation Order 14, 021500 I March 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁴⁵"General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 271," 22 March 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁴⁶X Corps Operation Order 16, 021200 I March 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁴⁷*The Korean War*, 2: 531-534.

⁴⁸"General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 264," 15 March 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁴⁹"General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Report 266," 17 March 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁵⁰*The Korean War*, 2: 554.

⁵¹Mossman, 345.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 349.

⁵³X Corps Operation Order 18, 311200 I March 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁵⁴"General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Reports 283-301," 3 April-21 April 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁵⁵"General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Reports 283-286," 3 April-6 April 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁵⁶X Corps Operation Order 18, 311200 I March 1951, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁵⁷“General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Reports 290,” 10 April 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁵⁸*The Korean War*, 2: 567.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 565.

⁶⁰“General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Reports 294,” 14 April 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁶¹“General Headquarters, United Nations Command, G3 Operations Reports 299,” 19 April 1951, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

⁶²*The Korean War*, 2: 712.

⁶³Mossman, 490.

⁶⁴Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 182-183.

⁶⁵Mossman, 502.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

When the North Koreans invaded in June of 1950, both the Republic of Korea Army and the US were completely unprepared. The ROK Army was composed of only eight infantry divisions and in the early days of the war, it had taken such devastating losses that what was left was reorganized into five infantry divisions which were barely combat effective. The first year of the war was one of intense, unrelenting combat, much of which went badly for the ROK Army. To be sure, the ROK army had some successes, however, the shame of defeat was more prevalent than the pride of success, especially in the first three months of the war.

For the first two months of the war, there was no US employment of ROK forces (at least in an organized fashion) and all combat actions conducted by ROK forces until the establishment of the Pusan Perimeter were uncoordinated battles fought at regiment and below. The ROK Army was in complete disarray as they retreated to the south and the US struggled desperately in an attempt to reorganize their units and stop the advance of the NKPA. Task Force Smith was an effort to establish an organized front with what could be collected of ROK forces but this attempt failed miserably and this failure is still remembered fifty years later.

Failures of the ROK and US Armies

Failures by the ROK Army in the first year of the war cannot be attributed to any one factor or singular event, but to a series of failures on the part of both the US and the

Republic of Korea government and military. The US failed to adequately prepare the ROK Army for the impending conflict, while the corruption within the ROK government and the army's nepotism in its officer corps both contributed to the army's unwillingness to stand and fight during an enemy offensive. Despite the spectacular combat failures on the part of the ROK Army, if looked at closely, it becomes evident that the failures on the part of the ROK Army took place primarily during large enemy offensive attacks. During the first year of the war, there were four major offensives conducted by NKPA and Chinese Communist Forces. During each of these offensives, the ROK divisions and corps which received the brunt of the attack each broke and were forced to give up large portions of the terrain they occupied. However, if the results of combat actions of the ROK Army are viewed in the context of offensive operations conducted by the United Nations, it can be seen that the ROK Army had numerous successes against the NKPA. Why did this occur?

As was brought out in various portions of the thesis, the ROK Army was a poorly trained army: poorly trained not in the quality of training they received through the various schools set up by KMAC, but poorly trained in the respect that the quantity of training the average soldier and leader received was well below what should have been required to establish a competent and confident army. This is evident by the low level of collective training that the ROK Army had undergone by the beginning of the war. By the end of June 1950, the ROK Army conducted almost no training at the battalion level or above. Training of ROK Army units below the battalion level was not much better. Across the ROK Army, only 30 percent of infantry platoons completed collective training.¹

Additionally, training for the leaders of the ROK Army was woefully inadequate. Like

training for the basic foot soldier in the Korean Army, training for the ROK Army's leaders was not necessarily of poor quality, just poor quantity. After the NKPA invaded South Korea, a Korean soldier would receive approximately ten days of hastily conducted individual training at one of the regional training centers before being sent off to the front. With the exception of limited offensive operations training conducted by KMAG advisors at the division level and below, it would not be until the summer of 1951 when the war would stabilize sufficiently enough for the ROK Army to start training again.

In addition to the low level of training, the inadequate equipment of the ROK Army had a significant impact on the failures of the ROK Army. At the beginning of the war, the ROK Army consisted solely of light infantry divisions. It possessed none of the heavy artillery or armored assets needed to defeat the NKPA as they advanced southwards, and the equipment it did have was mostly unserviceable and quickly abandoned. As a result, in the numerous battles fought by the ROK Army before the establishment of the Pusan Perimeter, divisions disintegrated and the ROK Army experienced heavy losses of personnel and equipment. As the US began to send personnel and equipment into the Korean theater, the availability of the necessary heavy artillery, anti-armor, and armored assets was just not at a level that would allow allocation to ROK Army forces to support their operations. As the war progressed, the need to equip ROK Army units with heavier weapons systems became more evident. ROK units augmented by US artillery or armored assets showed successes while units that did not receive augmentation were either defeated, or suffered high casualties for every foot of terrain they took. This left the US with a challenge that would not be resolved by the end of the first year of the war. On one hand ROK Army units abandoned large quantities of

equipment as they gave up terrain, on the other hand the ROK Army demonstrated that with the augmentation of heavier assets, they were capable of defeating NKPA forces.

Poor leadership on the part of the Koreans was prevalent during the entire war but none more so than in the first year of the war. This lack of competent leadership was a contributing factor to their failures. The prevalence of poor leadership in the Korean Army was more evident during the enemy's offensive operations. Without exception, when the CCF and NKPA conducted their attacks, the ROK Army lines broke. The reason for this is that leadership is inherently more difficult during the confusion of an overwhelming attack than it is during a coordinated offense. As enemy forces mounted their offensives, the poorly organized and trained ROK units could not adapt to meet and counter the enemy's actions. To compound this, many of the ROK officers and NCOs were not competent to serve in their positions. They had attained their positions not by their abilities and performance but rather through political appointment or connections. Their lack of experience caused them to perform poorly under combat situations and, as a result, many of them were either killed or replaced by the end of the first year of the war.

In addition to the lack of training, lack of serviceable equipment, lack of heavy artillery and armor, and the lack of competent leadership, the Korean Army had to contend with a rapid advance of almost five hundred miles in three months. Though an excellent example of a well-executed pursuit operation, the drive from the Pusan Perimeter to the Yalu River took its toll on the ROK Army. Having only just started to receive replacements for the many vehicles they abandoned after the NKPA attacked, the ROK Army primarily advanced northward by foot. In some instances, such as the ROK 1st Division's advance to P'yong'yang, attached US units conducted shuttle operations in

an effort to hasten the movement north. However this was the exception rather than the norm. The tempo held by the ROK Army was a function of the advance of the US I and IX Corps. As these two corps continued to advance rapidly up the western and central portions of the peninsula, the ROK units were forced to keep up. This pace was far in excess of what would have been prudent for the ROK Army given their lack of vehicles. By the time the ROK forces had reached the Yalu River in the eastern sector, the majority of ROK units were exhausted from the long march up the length of the peninsula. This, coupled with long lines of communication, left the ROK Army exhausted, low on supplies, and in a vulnerable position that contributed to their collapse when attacked.

Successes of the ROK and US Armies

While certainly the failures on the part of both the US and ROK Armies were prevalent during the first year of the war, the successes rapidly began to outnumber the failures as the war progressed. Within a month and a half after Task Force Smith had vainly tried to stop the North Korean forces at Osan, US forces in Korea had risen to slightly over four divisions. Additionally, there were sharp increases in the availability of close air support aircraft and naval gunfire. By the time the US had consolidated its forces within the Pusan Perimeter the situation had stabilized sufficiently enough and adequate forces were deployed in theater that would allow the US to augment Korean Army units with non-organic assets sufficient for them to accomplish their assigned missions. With these additional assets available, the successes of the ROK Army began to mount.

The breakout of the Pusan Perimeter was the first instance in the Korean War where the US had the opportunity to employ ROK Army units as part of an offensive; and

not just as a stop-gap measures to stop localized breakthroughs by the NKPA. It had become obvious to Generals Ridgway, Milburn, Coulter, and Almond after taking stock in what remained of the ROK Army by the time the Pusan Perimeter was established that if the US was to effectively employ ROK units that significant augmentation in the form of heavy artillery, armor, and in some cases transportation assets would be necessary.

The breakout of the Pusan Perimeter was also the first action in which the US was able to employ ROK Army units in accordance with current offensive doctrine. Once UN forces were in a position to follow established US doctrine, the accomplishments of ROK Army units changed considerably. Now having the wherewithal to support units outside its own forces, the US began to provide artillery, armored, and air assets to support ROK Army units in varying degrees commensurate with their assigned missions. Across the Eighth Army front, the US assets in theater no longer went to support the actions of only US units but were now being allocated to support offensive operations of ROK corps and divisions.

Since the ROK 1st Division was attached to the I Corps as part of the main effort for the breakout of the Pusan Perimeter, it became the first ROK unit to receive significant combat augmentation. The I Corps commander understood the shortcomings of ROK Army units and took the necessary measures to bring the 1st ROK Division up to a level equivalent of a US division by attaching the 10th Antiaircraft Artillery Group. The additional assets provided to the 1st ROK Division enabled it to dominate its fight with opposing NKPA forces and the resulting successful combat actions by the 1st ROK stunned US commanders.

The other ROK divisions did not receive the same level of support as the 1st Division. However, compared to the assets available to them before the war, it was a significant increase. As the UN began its breakout of the Pusan Perimeter, the divisions in the ROK I and II Corps, as part of the supporting effort, received close air and naval gunfire augmentation to support their portion of the breakout mission. Given the intelligence estimate of the enemy's strength in the ROK I and II Corps area the US determined that this support would be sufficient to allow the I and II Corps to accomplish their assigned mission. The actions by the I and II Corps during the breakout would prove this to be true.

Following the breakout of the Pusan Perimeter, ROK Army units continued to have a series of successes as they pushed the NKPA to the brink of the Chinese border. Despite the fact that the US had driven the ROK Army hard to keep up with the advancing frontline, ROK units continued to keep pace. The losses the ROK Army inflicted on the NKPA during the drive to the Yalu River were very similar to the devastating losses they had taken during the first months of the war. Augmented by naval gunfire and Marine close air support in the east, and heavy artillery and armor in the west it seemed during the months of October and November that the war would soon be over and Korea would be united under the government of the south. By the time the advance stopped just short of the Chinese border, the remnants of the NKPA assembled in an area south of the Chinese border that was smaller than the Pusan Perimeter.

As part of the US employment of ROK Army units, their assigned missions played a large part in their success. During the first year of the war, ROK Army units had missions that were secondary (supporting) efforts for the UN Command. There were two

primary reasons for this. First and foremost, the US always doubted the ability of ROK Army units. Combat readiness of ROK units before and after the start of the war was seen as lacking and this belief permeated the entire Eighth Army. Secondly, the maneuver capability in the ROK Army's divisions was just not there. Though the US immediately made great efforts to replace the transportation assets abandoned by the ROK Army it would take many months before this capability could be achieved. This effort constituted in itself a large logistical problem given the already huge effort to bring new men and equipment into theater. To meet this challenge, the US contracted Japanese manufactures in August 1950 to produce for the ROK Army 68,000 vehicles, mostly to be used for transportation, with the first deliveries scheduled for September.² To the US commanders in Korea these factors demanded that ROK Army units not be given a mission in a main effort role.

As stated earlier, the missions given to ROK Army units were the support of the main effort. Given the US lack of confidence in the ROK Army's capabilities and their lack of organic armor and artillery assets, assigning ROK Army units as the main effort would have produced catastrophic results. This fact is demonstrated in X Corps' disastrous use of the ROK 8th and 5th Divisions as the main effort in Operation Roundup. At no time in the war before Operation Roundup had ROK Army units been used as the main effort in a major assault against NKPA or Chinese forces and at no time during the remainder of the war would they be. Instead, ROK Army units generally fought in the more mountainous terrain of the central and eastern sectors where their lack of mobility would not significantly put them at a disadvantage, and where they would most likely encounter only light infantry forces of the either the CCF or NKPA.

After Ridgway took over as the commander of Eighth Army in late December 1950, the way the war would be fought changed significantly. The change in focus from a terrain-oriented fight to one that was force-oriented helped produce the various successes the ROK Army had between January and June 1951. Along with switching the focus of his combat units from a terrain-oriented war to a force-oriented war, Ridgway's insistence on establishing and maintaining close coordination with adjacent units provided for a stronger front across Eighth Army. Though this action inherently slowed the forward momentum in the offense, it strengthened the weaker boundary areas where two adjacent met. Ridgway's insistence for close coordination between adjacent units resulted in these units providing mutually supportive fires despite being in separate divisions or corps. From Operation Wolfhound to Operation Dauntless Eighth Army and its subordinate corps assigned missions to their assigned ROK Army units which were well within their capability to accomplish so long as they received the necessary augmentation in the form of artillery, armor, or close air support. As demonstrated in the first half of 1951, the US could successfully and effectively employ ROK Army units so long as the mission was within their capability and they were provided with the proper augmentation to support the mission.

The South Koreans remained a weak link in the chain of battle success. Their army had been built so fast and expanded so rapidly, and hammered so hard first by the North Koreans and then by the CCF, that its fighting ability was always questionable. The Americans desperately wanted the ROK Army to prosecute the war but they had to recognize that building an army while fighting the war was extremely difficult and the decisions on how, where and when to use to the ROKA was an even more difficult

challenge to US commanders. The best South Korean soldiers and officers became very good but there were not enough of them for an ever growing army in a very costly war. The tradition of political or family appointment to command was strong, and production of battle tested and dependable leaders, from noncommissioned officers on up, simply could not keep pace with the demand.

In the final analysis it is plain to see there were numerous failures across the board on the part of the US and Republic of Korea during the first twelve months of the war. However, failure on the part of US leadership to effectively employ Republic of Korea Army units was not one of them. Given the lack of proven leadership, low level of training, and lack of organic equipment in the ROK Army, US commanders tried to make the best of a very difficult situation concerning the employment of the ROK Army. In the end, the Korean Army during 1950-1951 was an immature army that, while undergoing the pains of intense combat, simultaneously underwent the pains of expansion and development. While Generals Ridgway, Coulter, Milburn, and Almond struggled with the daunting task of defeating the NKPA and Chinese Communist Forces, they had to do so while at first reorganizing and reequipping the ROK Army, and then equipping and training all the new recruits which were so desperately needed in the first year of the war.

Recommended Areas for Further Study

During the completion of this thesis, a number of questions arose which were outside the scope of this paper but which deserve further study. Before the outbreak of hostilities in Korea and throughout the first year of the war, the US failed to provide the Korean Army with any armor or artillery assets as part of their organizational equipment.

Initially this was due to the fact that the US did not want to take the chance that the South Koreans would attack the north and the concern that if the North Koreans attacked and the South Koreans abandoned their equipment then it would fall into the hands of the advancing North Korean Army. But even after the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter the US still did not provide any armor or large artillery assets to the ROK Army. Considering the change in the situation and the fact that the US wanted to drive the NKPA off the peninsula, it would seem that at this point it would have made sense both from a tactical point of view and the point of view that the ROK Army would someday be left to defend the peninsula that a strong and well equipped Army needed to be in place. So the question is why, even after US equipment started flowing into country did the US not equip ROK units with armor and large artillery and why was the initial plan of a ROK Army composed of light infantry units held to given the nature of the war and the need for heavy artillery and armor.

Another area for further research would be the arrangement of forces in theater after the intervention of Chinese Communist Forces after October of 1950. Once the Chinese entered the war, the predominant force on force arrangement were US units aligned against the Communist Chinese and the NKPA aligned against the ROK Army. While certainly the Chinese fought the ROK Army just as the US had fought NKPA forces, the majority of Chinese forces were aligned against the US while the majority of NKPA forces were aligned against ROK forces. It is unlikely that this force alignment was purely coincidental. The questions are, however: Was it was politically based? Was it because US military leadership in Korea lacked confidence in the ROK Army's ability to

defeat Chinese Communist Forces? or did Chinese forces purposely align their units with US forces in a showdown between Communism and Democracy?

The final question that arose, but was not addressed as part of this thesis, is: Why on numerous occasions did Generals Ridgway, Coulter, Milburn, and Almond become so involved in the placement of smaller level units? During the first year of the war, it was not uncommon to see the corps and army commanders making decisions on the placement of brigades, battalions, and even companies. This question applies not only to the placement of ROK Army units, but to US units as well. While certainly placement of subordinate units is within the purview of any commander, in a conflict as large as the Korean War, it is questionable why any general officer would get so involved in the placement of units which normally is considered the responsibility of subordinate commanders.

¹Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), 78.

²Roy E. Appleman, *US Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June-November 1950)* (Washington DC: Center of Military History), 261.

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